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TUESDAY, April 7, 1747.

MR. GREEN,

The following Essay being on a Subject that is of a general concern, I must, I fear, give it a Place in your Gazette, if taking better intersperses of the Kind, and you will oblige

Your humble Servant,

MERCATOR.

REFLECTIONS on an INSPECTION-LAW.

THE principal objection that seems to be raised against it, is the expence that will attend the execution of it. In this view which is given us of the matter, we only behold one side of the object; but, to form a right judgment of any subject, we should consider it in all it's parts. Let us therefore enquire, on the other hand, into the losses the Province sustains, and the advantages it lies under thro' the want of such a law.

It is generally computed there are 36000 hogheads of Tobacco made every year in the Province: But as what is shipped by the planters themselves, which may be distinguished by the name of Crop Tobacco, as it is in Virginia, is generally much better than what is bought in the country, which may be therefore called Purchase Tobacco; we shall divide it accordingly into these two sorts, and, to avoid confusion, consider the loss of each separately.

As we have no medium to discover the exact quantity of either, we can only conjecture that there are 16000 hogheads of Crop, and consequently 20000 hogheads of Purchase Tobacco; which we desire may be granted to us: For tho' the argument that follows may therefore seem hypothetical; yet, as the quantity of the one cannot be diminished without augmenting that of the other, the conclusions we shall draw from the proportion laid down may be easily varied, according to any other proportion that may appear more just.

In like manner, should the difference we make in the price of Tobacco from the two Colonies be too much, it will not alter the reasoning or the nature of the argument founded on it; as there is indubitably a very great difference, tho' it cannot be exactly fixed: And therefore, since it is demonstrable the advantage Virginia has over us in this respect is wholly owing to the Inspection-law there, whatever abatement may be justly made from what we have supposed it to be, there will still be a superiority left, more than sufficient to prove, that without such a regulation here, this Colony must, in a few years, inevitably, and perhaps irretrievably, lose the whole trade; which, as it is the most beneficial to Great Britain, so, with respect to the Province itself, it is by far the most valuable, or at least it might be easily made so, of any on the British continent of America.

We shall now proceed, and, in the first place, to shew, that if the fifth part of this 20000 hogheads of Purchase Tobacco be Trash, or what must be observed will always have the same effect, if the plants be handled and prized in such a careless manner as to diminish their value, as much as the fifth part Trash actually pack'd up with them would, the yearly loss to this Province will be 60000*l.* Sterling: To prove which I shall premise.

THAT the natural quality of our Tobacco being full as good as that of our Neighbours (except one particular sort which is out of the present question), it would, were it under the same regulations, net at home 6*l.* Sterling per hoghead; for so much it is said the Virginia Purchase Tobacco does now clear there.

The freight, insurance, commission, and other charges on a hoghead of Tobacco, amount to 5*l.* therefore, to net 6*l.* it

must sell for 11*l.* but if the fifth part be Trash, it can only sell for 8*l.* 16*s.* which is a fifth less, supposing the good could be pick'd out of it in England, and sold separate from the bad: But as most of the Tobacco from hence is bought up for the French consumption, the buyer is obliged, by reason of the draw back, to transport the Trash to some port of France; and as the money he disbursts for this purpose ought to yield him as much profit, as the like sum laid out in the purchase of merchantable Tobacco, it is not to be imagined that what he abates on this account, which he will do in making his price, can be less than 16*s.* and therefore he will give no more for such a hoghead than 8*l.* from which deducting 5*l.* for the other charges, there remains but 3*l.* for the shipper.

As it seems generally agreed, that more Tobacco is spoiled by the prizing and other negligent management, than the Trash actually pack'd up; the quantity of that in each hoghead, on an average, must be less than the half of the fifth, if the fifth on the whole be good for nothing; or, in other words, in this case the Trash willfully put up in every hoghead, taking one with another, must be less than the tenth part, and so there may be about 70 or 80*l.* in each; to replace which, there would not be any greater increase of labour necessary, than what the raising of the plants requires; the trouble of curing, packing, and prizing good and bad Tobacco being equal.

So small a difference in labour being too inconsiderable to perplex a calculation of this nature with it, we shall take it for granted, that in the same time which we now spend in making a bad hoghead, we might, with a little more care and attention (and that an Inspection-law will oblige us to), make a good one: And, in this view of the case, it will appear that the Province loses on every hoghead of Purchase Tobacco 3*l.* Sterling: The particulars stand thus: There is lost by the Trash, exclusive of the expences attending it, 24*l.* that being the fifth part of 6*l.* which a hoghead clear of Trash will net; by the expences on the Trash to London 20*s.* that being the fifth part of the charges of a whole hoghead, when sold at the scales there; and on account of the money disbursed for carrying the Trash to France, 16*s.* which makes together 37*s.* and this sum multiplied by 20000, the number of the hogheads of Purchase Tobacco, shews the annual loss to the Province thereon is 60000*l.* Sterling, on an admission of the fifth part to be good for nothing; and that the French make no greater abatement in the price, for the money they advance in transporting it to France, than 16*s.* on each hoghead.

THE Farmers general in that kingdom being as nice calculators as any in Europe, and having the sole privilege of importing Tobacco into France, must be presumed to know very nearly, from the accounts of their servants, who were only intrusted with the manufacturing and retailing of that commodity there, the quantity of Trash sent them from hence. But none can go to them from Virginia: The difference therefore they make in the price of the Tobacco from each Colony, must be wholly regulated by the Trash they have found in ours, *communibus annis*; a proportionable part of which they will always reckon upon in every cargo they purchase from hence, until they can be assured of the goodness of this commodity, on the public faith of the Province.

It therefore the French agents give 11*l.* per hoghead for the Virginia Purchase Tobacco, and but 8*l.* for that from Maryland, it is plain the latter contains a fifth part Trash, admitting the abatement made in the price for carrying it to France does not exceed 16*s.* on each hoghead; since on this supposition, it has been demonstrated, that such a quantity must necessarily produce that difference. But from what, as we are informed,