

C H A P. VI.

The Effects produced by the collateral Influence of the Police System in guarding, in a certain degree, other Branches of Trade, besides that of the West-Indies from Depredation, particularly the Tackle, Apparel, and Stores, of all Ships and Vessels in the River:—In the Utility of the Design to the East-India Company:—To the American and Hamburgh Merchants, evinced by the public Testimony of Ship-Masters in these Trades:—To the Canada Trade:—The Russian Merchants:—The Importers of Timber and Grain, Wines, Brandies, Fruits, &c.—And to the Coasting and Coal Trade:—In the Protection afforded to outward-bound Cargoes:—The Security shewn to be incomplete, inasmuch as the chief attention of the Police, and the Force it employs is principally confined to the Protection of West-India Property.—The General Extension of the Design highly desirable.

ALTHOUGH the Preventive System, as having originated with the Body of West-India Merchants, was of course, in a great measure, confined to the Protection of this species of Commercial Property, yet the general influence of the design extended
collaterally

collateraly to all Branches of Trade and Navigation in the River Thames: and it was only because the Civil Force was insufficient, and that the System did not admit of arrangements, calculated to compass the general Protection of the Port, that some Depredations continued to be committed.

Limited however, as it has been, both with respect to pecuniary Resources, and a competent number of Boats and Assistants, to overawe and detect Offenders in every part of a wide-extended River, and still more so on the numerous Wharfs and Quays, from whence the Police Guards were withdrawn as soon as the West-India Cargoes, under their charge, were in a state of Security; certain it is, that the regular Perambulation of the Police Boats, in their daily and nightly Surveys of the River (few as their numbers comparatively were) produced a very important effect in preventing those Depredations of River Pirates, upon the Tackle, Apparel, and Stores, of unprotected Ships, to which they had on former occasions, been exposed; and by which outrages considerable losses were sustained.

But these were not the only advantages which Ship and Craft Owners have received from the Establishment, and the operation of this Design, since it appears upon the Records of the Institution, that in Snow-Storms, and severe Weather, when Vessels drifted from their Moorings, and when only the Police Boats attempted to go upon the River, the nautical

tical skill and labour of the Surveyors and Boat Officers have been zealously excited in saving both Shipping and Craft, which would probably otherwise have been lost, (y) if such timely assistance had not been afforded.

To the Shipping and Craft in general, this Institution has afforded a security which cannot sufficiently be appreciated by those who have great Property at hazard in the River Thames, in times like the present, when the Crews cannot be kept on board, and when, besides the damages arising from tempestuous weather, a still greater calamity was at one period to be apprehended from conflagration, contemplated by incendiaries, whose diabolical designs, it is to be hoped, have been frustrated by the vigilance of the Marine Police, and the terror which the hazard of detection must have occasioned, from

(y) In the night of the 22d of October 1798, the Brig Tyger was discovered drifting, and in a situation of great danger, from which she was rescued by two of the Police Surveyors. On the 30th of January 1799, the American Ship Amiable was, at three o'clock in the morning, discovered by the Police Surveyors, to be in a very perilous situation, in a Snow-Storm, having drifted from her Anchors and carried away her Quarter Gallery, and approaching fast towards a tier of Shipping, where great damage must have ensued, had it not been for the interposition of Mr. Thompson a Police Surveyor, then on duty on the River, who assisted the Mate, a perfect stranger, in putting the Vessel into a state of Security. Various cases have occurred, where instances of Craft laden with valuable Cargoes, and also Boats have been found a-drift on the River and secured, until notice could be given to the Owners.

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a knowledge that the Police Boats were constantly upon the River.

To the *East-India Company*, although the system did not immediately extend its protection to their Ships, yet considerable benefit has been derived by the apprehension of Lumpers, with Tea, Pepper, and other Articles, and in exciting a greater degree of caution and vigilance on the part of the Revenue Officers, whose duty it was to prevent every species of Pillage and Depredation.

Nor have the Chairman and Directors of this great Company been backward in manifesting the sense they entertain of the utility of this new Establishment, since they have committed to its charge matters of considerable importance, on which both secrecy and confidence, in the proper execution of the trust, became indispensably necessary.

Among the various branches of trade carried on, to and from the Port of London, those of *America* and *Germany*,^(z) (where the aggregate Imports and Exports amount to above Sixteen Millions a year) have not only felt, but acknowledged the advantages which have been derived from the Marine Police, even upon its present very limited scale,—as appears by the following testimonies:—

WE the undersigned, *Masters of American Ships*, trading to the Port of London, do publicly declare, that until the establishment of the Marine Police, the Cargoes and Stores of our Ships, while delivering and taking in, were constantly subject

(z) See Table, p. 22.

to Plunder, by various descriptions of Plunderers on the River Thames, but since such an establishment of a River Police, we have experienced the greatest difference as to the security of Property on the River, occasioned, in our opinion, by the vigilance of the Guard Boats, and Officers of the Marine Police Institution, constantly, day and night, patrolling on the said River. In testimony whereof, we hereunto subscribe our names, and the Ships we respectively command.

Signed by Seventeen Ship-Masters.

WE, the undersigned *Masters of Hamburgh Ships and Vessels*, trading to the Port of London, being truly sensible of the manifest difference as to the security of Property, on the River Thames, arising from the vigilance of the Guard Boats and Officers of the Marine Police Institution, patrolling the River, by day and by night, do consider it our duty voluntarily and publicly to declare, that whereas, formerly our Cables, Hawsers, and every article of Ships' Stores, as well as the inward and outward Cargoes of our Ships, while delivering or taking in, were continually subject to the greatest Plunder, by a set of lawless banditti, that then infested the River: We have, since the establishment of the Marine Police Institution, experienced the most beneficial effects, in the protection afforded by the vigilance of the Boats and Officers belonging to the Office; and in testimony do subscribe our names, and the names of the Ships and Vessels we respectively command.

Signed by Thirty Ship-Masters.

The valuable Trade with *Canada*, has also felt the protecting influences of the System, and the detection of various Offenders in committing very extensive Depredations on *Hemp*, imported from *Russia*, has been the means of recovering considerable quantities of that Article which had been plundered and stolen.

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Nor has the extensive Commerce in *Timber* and *Grain* been less benefited, by the collateral checks to the pillage to which these branches have been exposed. The detections and the punishments which have taken place, operated powerfully in diminishing the great losses which were annually sustained.

In the importation of *Fruits, Wines, Dye Stuffs, Brandies, Gin, and other Liquors*, considerable benefits have been derived from the security which the Police established, in overawing Delinquents, who turned their attention to this species of plunder; and particularly those, who, by means of Jiggers, Tin Tubes, Skins, and Bladders with nozles, were accustomed to draw off and purloin large quantities of Liquors.

The *Coasting Trade* has also shared in the general advantages which have arisen by the dissolution of these numerous Criminal Confederacies, whose depredations extended to this, as well as all other Commercial Property.

But the *Coal Trade*, in particular, has obtained advantages which only require to be understood, in order to demonstrate that the benefits extend not only to original Owners and Coal Merchants, but also to every consumer of this species of Fuel, whose supplies depend on the importation into the River Thames. The important reform of the excessive abuses which prevailed in this Trade, is rendered manifest by a candid and fair comparison of the state it was in, before and since the existence of the Po-

lice System. The prevention of the excessive Pillage in the Colliers, and the consequent abolition of public Markets, for the sale of plundered Coals, and the check given to the daily and nightly depre-dations which were committed in the Coal Barges, will be best explained by the following public tes-timony :—

At a general Meeting of the Buyers and Factors of Coals, in the Port of London, held this Day, at the Gun Tavern, Billingsgate—Dated the 9th January, 1799.

It was resolved, that it is the opinion of this Meeting, that the Pillage of Coals, in the River Thames, has been consider-ably prevented by the exertions of the Marine Police Office, which exertions, it is hoped, will be continued in future. It is likewise determined, that a copy of the above resolution shall be sent to the Office, signed by the Chairman.

(Signed,) J. R. WOOD, Chairman.

To the firmness, temper, and humanity, which, from the first moment, have been displayed in resort-ing more generally to seasonable admonitions, than to the example of punishment, is to be attributed the very general sense which an unpolished race of men entertains of the former turpitude of their conduct; and the important change which has been brought about, with respect to offences of this nature.

Such has been the effect of this very limited experiment, with respect to the various articles *imported* into the River Thames.

It has been supposed, that the extensive robberies

committed on *outward-bound Cargoes*, have arisen in part, or at least have considerably increased, in consequence of the numerous gangs of thieves being cut off from the other resources of pillage, which they formerly possessed in so eminent a degree, and almost without check or control ; but it is known from recent evidence, that offences of this nature have long existed, and been carried on to a great extent ; and that the detection and discovery of this species of plunder is, in a peculiar manner, to be attributed to the general influence of the system of River Police.

It is not however unlikely, that certain classes of Delinquents, who had been long accustomed to profit by the privilege they assumed of plundering homeward-bound Cargoes, and who perhaps, trusted to this as a means of enabling them to indulge in luxuries and extravagance above their station, (and not within the compass of their fair earnings,) may have availed themselves of the very unprotected state of outward-bound Cargoes, in committing acts of depredation, which would not have taken place had not other resources failed.

Be this as it may, the records of the Institution shew, that the detection of Offenders in this line of Plunder has been more numerous, during the short period since the Marine Police was established, than for many years before : and if that vigilance which has produced these discoveries, and the examples which followed, can have any influence in overawing

Delinquents, and in preventing a repetition of the same mischief, the Export Trade in common with the Imports, has derived benefit from the security which has been thus afforded.

It must be admitted, that these benefits and this security can only at present be considered as partial, since the effective part of the System as yet applies only to one branch of Trade, to the protection of which the Civil Force is chiefly directed. This however, admits of an easy remedy; namely, an extension of the Design to the whole Commerce of the Port. The propriety of a measure so salutary, even without the various lights which this Treatise throws upon the subject, has already engaged the attention, and excited the exertions of many of the most respectable characters, in whom the Commercial Body place their chief confidence; but the details and explanations which relate to the various remedies which ought to be applied for the purpose of eradicating the evil, and rendering the security permanent and complete, will be reserved for another Chapter.