

C H A P. VII.

Considerations on the National advantages of the Marine Police Institution:—The benefits which would arise from an extension of the same design, to every Commercial Port where extensive Trade is carried on:—Exemplified in the instance of Liverpool, and the River Severn.—The benefits to the State demonstrated, in the preservation of the duties on Stolen Property; in the check given to illicit Trade; and in the protection afforded to Naval, Victualing, and Military Stores.—The sense entertained by the Commissioners of the Navy, of the deficiency of the Laws, and of the want of a proper Police, with respect to this species of Property.—Specific detections of the pillage and embezzlement of Public Property.—Reasons for estimating the saving to the Revenue under the establishment of the Marine Police, at not less than £.150,000 a year:—The security it also affords against conflagration by Incendiaries.—Concluding Observations.

IN all instances where internal regulations operate beneficially to bodies of men or individuals, an essential advantage results to the Nation at large.

In this point of view, the Marine Police Institution
becomes

becomes extremely prominent, as a wise measure of Government, highly interesting wherever Commerce is carried on, since it appears that the contagion of Pillage is not confined to the River Thames alone; but has infected every Port in the Kingdom, more or less, in proportion to the increase of opulence, and the extent of Commercial Property in circulation. (a) Nor is this view of the too general corruption of morals among Aquatic Labourers, carried even to the extent which truth and a knowledge of facts fully warrant.

Evil examples are of rapid growth; and where no pruning hand exists, they speedily extend their poison far and wide. It appears, in fact, that the immense Property which floats upon navigable Rivers and Canals in all quarters, is become subject to Waste and Depredation in a very great degree. (b) Strongly evincing

(a) Since the establishment of the Marine Police, an application has been made to the Superintending Magistrate, by the Secretary of the West-India Merchants trading to the Port of Liverpool, representing that *even there*, notwithstanding the *conveniency of the Docks and Warehouses*, excessive pillage takes place, particularly in the article of Coffee, which is conveyed to Manchester in great quantities:—and requesting information respecting the plan pursued on the Thames for suppressing this evil.—Every information and assistance was of course afforded.

(b) A Letter recently received by the Magistrates of the Marine Police, from a respectable House in Stourport in Worcestershire, contains the following statement:—“ We are Proprietors of Trows
“ and Barges in the River Severn, employed in the conveyance of
“ the most valuable Manufactures of this Country, between this
“ place and the Port of Bristol every Spring-tide. Our Vessels,
“ called

evincing that the science of Police as it has been applied to the River Thames, has become a great
National

“ called Trows, are all open. The Goods are protected from
 “ damage by tarpaulins only. They will carry 120 Tons or more,
 “ and are navigated by seven or eight men, but never proceed
 “ higher up the River than from Bristol to Gloucester. After-
 “ wards, the Cargo is put into Barges, and the Crew distributed
 “ amongst them; and these with occasional assistance bring their
 “ Cargo home. On the downward voyage, the Goods are put on
 “ board of from three to ten or more Barges, which convey them to
 “ Gloucester; a part of the men proceed from thence in the Trow
 “ to Bristol with the Goods, while the others return home to be
 “ ready for the ensuing springs. It is during the transit of these
 “ upward and downward Cargoes of the most valuable Merchan-
 “ dise, that the most daring, systematic, and enormous Plunder is
 “ carried on, which would stagger credibility, and which affects
 “ us as common Carriers so seriously, that not knowing how or in
 “ what manner to proceed, we have made free to solicit the favour
 “ of your assistance. At an extravagant expence and infinite
 “ trouble, we employ people to weigh the various packages of
 “ Manufactures of Sheffield, Birmingham, and Manchester, on
 “ receipt and delivery, when it not unfrequently turns out, that a
 “ package weighing alike at each place, shall contain a quantity of
 “ Bricks and Stones as a substitute for other valuables. The
 “ common men receive 13s. or 14s a-week besides provisions,
 “ notwithstanding not a Cargo arrives without depredations being
 “ committed. There are four other concerns of this sort, of
 “ which ours is one, whose losses are grievous. It is supposed
 “ there are Receiving-houses for the reception of the articles which
 “ are stolen, in the neighbourhood of Newnham; and a respectable
 “ Inhabitant of that place states, that it will be attended with no
 “ small degree of danger, to attempt to detect and punish them.
 “ We are persuaded there cannot come a cask of Liquors without
 “ adulteration, and no Gentleman will trust a pipe of Wine in
 “ their hands. The Masters of Vessels are equally ignorant as
 “ their Crews, and are supposed to league with them. This, added
 “ to the extreme difficulty of bringing home the charge, and the
 “ slight

National object; and that the application of remedies similar to those adopted in the Port of London, is requisite wherever Commercial Property passes in transit.

To the Country at large therefore, this successful experiment becomes highly interesting, inasmuch as an antidote to a growing evil has been thus discovered by the general application of which Property is to be preserved from Waste and Pillage; the Public Revenue is to be secured; and the morals of a great and useful body of people amended and improved.

To these general advantages which must result to the Country, by extending the regulations of political œconomy, which have been experimentally proved to be so salutary and correct with respect to the security of Commercial Property on the River Thames, are to be added the specific benefits which are derived by the State, not only from the increase of Revenue obtained on many valuable articles which were plundered and smuggled; but also from the prevention of a considerable proportion of the illicit Trade which formerly prevailed by the dread of detection by the Police Officers, and the obloquy attached to men who are thus subjected to a public inquiry on suspicion of being Criminals.

“ slight punishment inflicted, emboldens to more flagrant and continued robbery.—£.1000 value of Salt was stolen last year.—
 “ After you have considered this, may we be permitted to hope
 “ for your reply.—*Stourport, August 13, 1799.*”

But

But these are not the only benefits which the State has derived from the effect of the Marine Police. His Majesty's Naval, Victualing, and Military Stores, have experienced a security heretofore unknown. Many extensive depredations have been prevented merely from the terror which the system excited, and from the detections which held forth to Delinquents, the danger to which they were exposed from the vigour and energy of the design.

The records of the Institution and the frequent communications with the Navy and Victualing Boards, in consequence of the pillage and embezzlements of Public Stores which were discovered and detected, sufficiently prove that the influence of this branch of Police, crippled as it has been for want of apposite Laws, (c) was not confined in the
benefits

(c) The deficiency of the Laws as they particularly apply to minor offences in purloining and embezzling His Majesty's Stores, have been so prominent in the view of the Commissioners of His Majesty's Navy, by the recent acquittal of several Offenders, that they have formed the laudable resolution of applying to Parliament for more apposite Legislative Regulations, calculated to reach the various cases of pillage which now frequently occur, where the Culprits escape without any punishment at all, to the great injury of the Public, inasmuch as crimes of a peculiar description are generated and increased from the security experienced by Delinquents. As a proof of the favourable sentiments entertained of the Police System by the Commissioners, and of their patriotic intention to use every means for the purpose of checking this extensive and growing evil, the following Letter has been addressed by their Solicitor to the Author of this Work, who is now anxiously employed in devising a plan of Police adapted to the prevention of
Frauds,

benefits it conferred, to Commercial Property alone; but that it extended collaterally to the protection of every species of Government Stores in transit upon the River Thames.

The effect of the System operating thus beneficially to the State, is proved not only by the number of persons who have been detected and punished, (*d*)

Frauds, Plunder, and Embezzlements, in His Majesty's Arsenals, Dock-yards, and Ships of War and Transports, &c.

SIR,

Norfolk-Street, May 16, 1799.

The Commissioners of the Navy, having an intention of applying to Parliament, to extend and amend the Laws for preventing the embezzlement and stealing of His Majesty's Naval Stores, and having directed me in preparing the intended Bill, to attend to the suggestions and recommendations on the subject in your excellent and valuable Publication, I shall consider myself as obliged to you, as I am sure the Commissioners will, if you will at your leisure have the goodness to furnish me with any hints upon the subject, which may have occurred to you since the publication of your Treatise, and which you think may be worthy the attention of the Legislature. I am Sir, with great respect,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

To P. Colquhoun, Esq.

CHAS. BICKNELL.

(*d*) Besides the detection of three Masters of Transports and eleven other persons, (Seamen and others), having Naval Stores unlawfully in their possession, a most extensive pillage and embezzlement in the numerous Victualing Hoys, conveying Liquors, Provisions, and other Stores, to the Russian Men-of-War, and His Majesty's Ships in the Rivers Thames and Medway, have been discovered. The Receivers residing in the Towns and Villages adjoining the River, have been prosecuted, or exposed, and several of the Masters of the Hoys and others who were concerned in the Conspiracy, have been dismissed and punished; and the evil has, by means of the exertions of the Police, and the laudable examples made by the Commissioners of Victualing, been in a great measure prevented.

but

but still more by the apparent diminution of the evil.

Hence it would seem, that in whatever relates to the permanent establishment of this System, the State is not less interested than the Individuals. The benefits are mutual with respect to the security of Property against the depredations of Delinquents, while in other respects, a paramount interest is felt by the Government of the Country, not only in the improvement of the Revenue, (*e*) which must have increased very considerably, but also in the security against conflagration arising from the vigilance of the System, in carrying into effect the Laws relating to Gun-Powder and boiling of Pitch, and other combustible matter in Ships, while at their Moorings in a crowded Port.

Nor is it unfair to presume, although no direct proof can be advanced, that the Marine Police has been of singular use in counteracting the traitorous designs of these desperate Incendiaries, who appear from evidence, founded on the highest authority, to have meditated the destruction of the whole Shipping in

(*e*) If it is admitted, according to evidence, that there is not one-fiftieth part of the plunder of West-India Goods which formerly took place, it must follow that the Revenue on the remaining forty-nine-fiftieths, estimated at more than 100,000*l.* must, on Sugar, Coffee, and other articles, paying a high duty, be equal to 50,000*l.* a year, besides what is gained on all other articles of Commerce:—an advantage rendered farther manifest by the open declaration of Smugglers,—“*That their Trade has been more cut up by the Marine Police, than by the whole combined efforts of the Revenue Officers.*”—

This

in the River Thames in the year 1798, by a general conflagration. The evil happily has not taken place; and it may not be unreasonable to suppose, that the dread of detection which the System excited, in consequence of the unremitting vigilance of the Surveyors, in perambulating the River with an armed force during the whole of the night, has defeated these diabolical designs.

The utility of a watchful Police for the purpose of controlling, by its influence, the turbulent and unruly passions of such a multitude of dissolute characters, who are at all times employed in Ships and Craft in this extensive Commercial Port, is too evident to require any comment; since occasional conspiracies among Seamen and Labourers, as well as tumults and disorders, may always be dreaded, where such a general corruption of morals prevails among so great a body of the lowest classes of the Community; unless prevented by a well-regulated and effective Police, adapted in all respects to the prevention of the various evils which have been already detailed; and which has become the more necessary, from the view which has been given in this Work, of the gradual and unfortunate change which has taken place in the sentiments and opinions of a very useful body of men, with respect to depredations on Commercial and Public Property.

This however, may arise more from the nature of the Police System, and the dread of immediate Punishment, than from any want of exertion on the part of the Superior Officers of the Revenue.

CHAP.