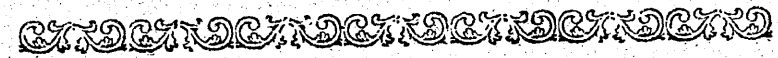


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REFLECTIONS  
ON THE PRESENT STATE  
OF THE  
EAST-INDIA TRADE;  
AND  
PROPOSALS  
TO RENDER IT  
OF MORE GENERAL BENEFIT  
TO THE  
BRITISH NATION,  
WITHOUT CHANGING THE PRESENT SYSTEM.



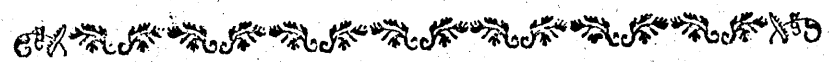
## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

**T**HE author of the following hints, humbly submits them to the consideration of the public, and hopes they will be properly attended to, as containing proposals, of the utmost consequence to the nation, to the India Company, and to merchants in general, who wish to see this trade enlarged for the benefit of all his Majesty's subjects.

These reflections are not the fruits of empty speculation, but drawn from the result of the author's practice in the several branches of trade treated of, during his long residence in India; and he thinks at this time, they may be useful to his country, which is the end of his making them public.

*Edinburgh, Jan. 16, 1769.*

REFLECTIONS



## R E F L E C T I O N S

O N T H E

## E A S T - I N D I A T R A D E.

**O**UR first East-India merchants, intent upon immediate gain, carried bullion from England, to purchase the manufactures of Indostan and China, as these luxuries were much in demand in Europe; and, their end being profit, it was of no consequence to them, whether gained at the expence of the nation or not; but they never thought of introducing our manufactures amongst the inhabitants of the islands Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, &c. islands east of Atchen-head; the kingdoms of Pegu and Siam, Cambodia, Cochin-China, and Tonquin; besides the island of Madagascar, and the whole east coast of Africa. The inhabitants of these countries would consume a prodigious quantity of our manufactures if introduced, and give us gold-dust, silver, pepper, raw-silk, tin, cassia, wax, gum-benjamin, ivory, dammer, fagoe, nay even spices in return.

I am returned from India, after having traded much to those countries, and once

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went upon a trading voyage to the Moluccas; but was unfortunately cast away in the year 1762, near the island of Bouton, which lies to the south-east of Celebes.

During five months I was amongst the Dutch, after my shipwreck, at the island Salayer, at Macassar on the island Celebes, at Madura and Gressy on the coast of Java, &c. I endeavoured to learn something of the state of the Dutch spice-trade.

The Dutch propagate, as much as they can, an opinion, that no spices grow but on the islands of Amboyna and Banda. They say, they send their caracaras (a sort of boat) annually, to destroy all the spice-trees in the circumjacent islands: but, considering the extent and number of those islands, and the difficulty of penetrating into the woods, with which they are generally covered, the attempt is impracticable.

There are many small islands east of Banda, on which the nutmeg grows, and it is notorious amongst the Malleys, that the clove grows on Bouro, Xulabello, Ceram, and many more islands near Ternate and Tidore, from whence the \* Buggeffes

\* The Buggeffes are chiefly the inhabitants of Celebes; they are Mahometans as the Malleys are, but they speak a particular language, although all of them understand the Malley language. There are colonies of them at Passier on Borneo, at Cumbava and various other places. They make excellent soldiers,

bring

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bring great quantities of them yearly to Bencoolen on the coast of Sumatra, to Passier on the coast of Borneo, and to Salingore and Queda in the Streights of Malacca.

If we consider the extent of the spice-islands on the chart, it is impossible the Dutch can possess them all. Nay, they are at continual war with many of the inhabitants, who presume to trade in the spontaneous productions of their own country; and, when they catch a Buggeffs prow, they rifle her, put the crew to death, then destroy her. The Buggeffes, knowing the alternative, go generally in fleets, and pass Malacca in spite of the Dutch.

The Dutch pretend to an exclusive right to all the Moluccas. How far we can pretend to dispute it with them, or to make settlements amongst people, who never acknowledged the Dutch their masters, but are willing to receive us with open arms, I leave to the world to judge. This I am certain of, the fortifications of the Dutch, all over these countries, are in very bad repair; their garrisons hardly used; their marine, which consists mostly of prows, and dull sailing sloops, now and then a snow of ten or twelve guns, is on a most despicable footing; and the inhabitants of

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those islands, universally groaning under their tyranny and oppression.

Not only the spice islands, but Borneo, Celebes, and many more islands, scattered up and down the eastern parts of India, besides the continental countries before-mentioned, would take off many British manufactures, if once introduced, such as scarlet-cloth, cutlery of all kinds, iron-mongery, especially nails and sharp-tools, lead, copper, brass, and tin ware, and many other articles.

All the countries to the east of the Cape of Good Hope, as far as the South Sea, is called *East-India*; but to how small a part of it do we trade at present! Except the peninsula of Indostan, a little of Persia, Canton in China, Bencoolen and its dependencies on the coast of Sumatra, all the rest lie as it were waste, although the most rich and valuable, as producing gold and spices.

I have often employed my thoughts about how far another East-India Company might be set up, without clashing with the present; such a company might certainly be permitted to carry out what they pleased of our manufactures, to trade with in India from port to port; they might then let out their ships to bring home the present Company's

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Company's goods upon freight. It is not to be supposed, however, that the present Company would give them much encouragement, and it would by no means answer to come home empty. This may be thought a sufficient objection; but, when it is considered, that a cargo of pepper, cassia, tin, wax, spices, besides gold, silver, and precious stones, is to be got in exchange for the commodities of Great Britain, a returning cargo could certainly be made up; one exact distinction might be made between the two companies, viz. that no new company's ship should bring home any cloaths or silks of any kind whatever, or any tea or porcelaine.

The tract for the new company's ships, would be to steer from the Cape of Good Hope, clear of Indostan, and fall in with the Mallay islands at once. After trading with them, they should go to Indostan, and there dispose of their pepper, wax, tin, sapan wood, rattans, gum-benjamin, native camphyre, birds nests, and swallo, (bech de mer) for the China market, besides cloves, nutmegs, and mace, gold, silver, and precious stones: I say, they should return to Madras and Bengal, and there dispose of the above articles, for which they would get a great price, and there

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there they should purchase a cargo of various articles, such as long cloth, white and blue, cambays, morees, falempores, mazulipatnam handkerchiefs, and gingham on the Coromandel coast. At Bengal they should purchase coffees fine and middling, hummums fine, middling and ordinary, baftas middling and ordinary, taffataes, heavy and ordinary, romalls, and coarse gingham of all sorts, besides the article of opium, which is a capital one, sticklack, and various other Indostan commodities; but, on those above mentioned, there is generally *cent. per cent.* profit to be had from the Mallays. When she has disposed of these, she might return to Europe, with tin, pepper, wax and spices, which noways interfere with the present company, save in the article of pepper; but a further importation of it would certainly so far enrich the nation.

It is obvious, that the more of the above cloths is taken off the hands of the industrious Indostan weaver, it will be the better for the country, which now pays us such a revenue; and the Mallays in general have all their cloathing from Indostan; for, being a lazy set of people themselves, and making very little cloth, they are necessitated to search for gold dust in the bottom of their clear streams to buy it with.

The

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The Dutch, in the island Sumatra, formerly wrought the mines there at Padang: but they have now left it intirely to the Mallays, from whom they purchase it with the above named commodities of Indostan. Here it may be objected, that the new company's ships may, in spite of the utmost vigilance, smuggle Indian cloths and silks into the West-Indies and America. In answer to which, I can only say, that, considering the drawback on East-India goods exported from London, they will get little more at New-York for a piece of white long cloth, than from a Mallay-man, and no more for Hyson tea in any of our colonies than at Calcutta in Bengal. But should this altogether be found impracticable for any vessel, but the present company's vessels, to sail to India, and return again, let there be permission for the subjects of Great Britain to send ships or vessels to India, there to remain or to be sold.---Vessels in general in India are an hundred *per cent.* dearer than in Europe: all repairs of vessels in India are very dear, and all naval stores twice the price they are at home; therefore this scheme would encourage our ship-building at home, and extend the country-trade in India. The seaman so left would always find vacancies, both in Dutch and English ships,

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ships, but especially in Dutch ships, to return home in. And here I must remark, the Dutch use their seamen very ill going out, but very mildly coming home; the reason is, a seaman can complain and have redress in Holland, but dare not complain at Batavia; and the Dutch commonly give great encouragement to English sailors to run from their ships to bring their own ships home: and supposing these vessels had made two or three country voyages, the proceeds could always be turned into money at Bengal; the vessel especially would fetch a good price, and the money could be remitted or shipped for Britain at a very small risque. Thus the voyage would end, and the concern be wound up, without running the risque of the ship's returning to Europe.

Thus far I have supposed a new company to be set up, not to clash with the present company; but lest, upon consideration, either scheme should prove impracticable, I beg leave to say something more.

During the many passages I have made in India, I have always experienced, that according to an old saying, the furthest way about was the surest and shortest, that is, when seasons and monsoons prevented the possibility of making a direct cut from  
port

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port to port.---Within these fourteen years, the outward passage, from Madras to Bombay, *i. e.* the passage against the monsoon, has been attempted and executed by Commodore James, and the outward and eastern passage from Madras to China, has also been executed by Captain Wilson of the Pitt eight years ago, by sailing east in a low latitude through the Moluccas beyond Gilolo, where, in the South-sea, he took up an easterly wind, which carried him to China by the eastward of the Philippines. Both these passages are now very common. For my part, I wonder ships were never sent home from China by the South-sea and Cape Horn, when a late dispatch prevented their coming the ordinary way, and obliged them to lie six months at China for the change of the monsoon. But before I proceed, I must communicate my idea of circumnavigation which this supposes.

All our circumnavigators have gone round Cape Horn into the South-sea; in doing which, many have suffered great hardships and difficulties; but when it is considered, how unnatural it is to attempt to sail west round that Cape, where hard west winds are almost constantly prevailing, it may be wondered, why no body has gone into the South-sea, by the other

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Cape

Cape, the Cape of Good Hope, leaving New Holland on the left hand, as by this tract they are sure of a fair wind, whilst in a high south latitude, and can return by Cape Horn with a fair wind also. This seems to me the most natural method of circumnavigating, and will coincide with what I have further to propose.

I have just now received letters from Peru, by which I am informed of the great price that muslins, and all other East-India goods sell for there. Muslins middling-fine, which cost only one rupee at Bengal, sell there for five or six Spanish dollars *per* yard. The Spanish supply them but scantily from Cadiz and Acapulco to keep up the price; but, as the inhabitants are very rich, I make no doubt, but they would purchase these goods from any vessel that would appear on their coasts.

How far this would interfere with the Spaniards, I cannot pretend to give my sentiments, but proceed to what I would wish to see executed for the benefit of the commerce of Great Britain.

Let a new company be erected, called the Circumnavigating East-India Company, who shall have permission to carry to East-India what manufactures of Great Britain they please. There they are to take in what  
piece-

piece-goods they think proper from the present company's factors, who are to supply them at a certain price; or perhaps it would be better to let this new company have their own factors in Indostan, to purchase cloths in the market. The new-discovered continent in the South Sea, which I imagine is not far from Peru, should be ceded to this new company, from whence, as from a safe retreat, they could supply Peru and Chili with East-India commodities, as Jamaica now supplies the Spanish main, to the great advantage of Britain. The tract to the said new-discovered country is most obvious in south latitude, running east with the westerly winds round the Cape of Good Hope, and leaving New Holland on the left hand.

At any rate, was this new-discovered continent vested in a new company, or given to the public, it would pave the way to a great extension of trade and discovery, which the present East India Company will certainly never prosecute, as they must evidently neglect what is of the utmost consequence to them, although very near their present settlements.

A ship from Bengal, bound into a high south latitude, is sure of a fair wind, if she can only get out of the river.

If

If she goes out with the south-west monsoon, which she will find west by south and west-south-west, in the middle of the bay; no sooner does that wind leave her, which will be in four or five degrees south latitude, but she will find the east trade, which will carry her to 30 degrees south, where the ship is sure of a westerly wind again; and, if still in the same meridian, though she may be a good deal east of it, suppose eight degrees, the run to Cape Horn will then be 200 degrees of longitude, which at 40 miles per degree is 8000 miles, which at 100 miles per day is 80 days. But a ship will readily run above 200 miles per day, with a close-reefed top-sail gale on her quarter; but call it 180 miles, the time will then be about 44 days, which, with 60 degrees of latitude, at the moderate rate of 120 miles per day, is 30 days, in all 74 days, or 2 months and an half; much about the time a ship takes to run to the Cape of Good Hope, when the season is in her favour.

When the great difference is considered between failing away with a fair wind, and beating against a foul wind, which their failing home round the Cape of Good Hope very often exposes them to, I do not know whether in time the coming home by Cape Horn

Horn from India, will not be very common, especially if the dispatch is in the least out of season.

The price of cloves at the Moluccas is about sixpence per lib.; at Passier on Bornio the price is about 2 s. 6 d.; at Bencoolen from the Bugges's prows, the price is commonly 25 L. per pecull of 133 lb.; and the price at Bengal is commonly 8 or 9 s. per lb.

The Dutch supply all the world with spices. What the Bugges's carry to Bencoolen, &c. is of little consequence to them; their prows are small, and they must go and come with the monsoon.

The frontiers to the Moluccas are Macassar and several little settlements on Celebes and Salayer to the west; Timor to the south; the unsettled country of Gilolo and New Guinea to the east; and Ternate and Tidor to the north.

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