



# CONSIDERATIONS

On the GREAT ADVANTAGES which would arise from the

# DISCOVERY

OF THE

# NORTH WEST PASSAGE,

And a clear Account of the most

# PRACTICABLE METHOD

FOR

# Attempting THAT DISCOVERY.

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**I**T is generally the Fate of such as propose making Discoveries for the publick Service, to be treated with Ridicule ; their Schemes being commonly esteemed so interested, chimerical and uncertain, as not to merit the Expences that are necessary for their Execution ; hence Pursuits of this Nature are discouraged and abandoned ; the Reason of which seems to arise rather from our Want of Consideration, a competent Knowledge of the Terraqueous Globe, Inattention to the Benefits we enjoy from Trade, and too little Regard for Posterity, than from any Conviction deduced from Experience, that useful Discoveries may not be made, and a new and profitable Commerce be derived from thence.

But notwithstanding these Discouragements, there will be found in every Age and Country, Men bold enough from Motives founded merely on the Love of Fame, and the Desire of rendering true Service to Society, who will readily engage in such Undertakings. In most Countries too, where Science, publick Virtue, and Liberty prevails, there will in some Seasons, at least, arise Ministers so publick spirited, as to think that Pursuits of this Nature deserve Encouragement, and that it is reasonable to risk something in Favour of those who are willing to hazard themselves for the Good of their Country.

A Necessity for acting, is of all others the strongest Motive to act ; so a real Want of new Channels of Trade in a Country that subsists by it, is the strongest Motive to use our Endeavours to acquire them. That this is now our Case will be very evident to any one, who will candidly consider the Condition of our Commerce at present, it may be said that it has been pushed to its utmost Extent, and that it now appears to be upon the Decline in several of its Branches, but especially the *Turkey*, *African*, and *West-India* Trades.

The Cause of this is very manifest. The same Spirit of Industry and Traffick that gained us the Superiority as a Maritime Power, is received

ceived, cherished and promoted in all the Countries of *Europe* where it is practicable; hence these Markets, which we only formerly furnished with Manufactures and Commodities, are in part supplied by others, which makes it clear, that in Proportion as we are rivalled in those Respects, the Sources of our Wealth, Power and Influence must be diminished, and that of our Rivals and natural Enemies augmented.

No Measure, I presume, can so effectually remedy this growing Evil, as a new and exclusive Commerce, which can only result from the Discovery of other Countries, than those we now have an Intercourse with. I may therefore venture to advance, that of all the Discoveries which have been proposed or attempted, that which bids fairest for the Approbation of the Publick, and procuring solid Advantages to this Kingdom, is that of the North West Passage into the *South Seas*, and this for many Reasons, of which I shall mention the most apparent.

If the Discovery of that Passage was accomplished, as we should have from thence a Right to it, so from our present Situation and Circumstances, we should of all Nations be the most capable of securing the Advantages of it to ourselves. This Communication by Sea would open to us a Trade with all the Countries lying between our own Settlements in *North America*, and the eastern Parts of *Asia*, might be a Means of entering into a Correspondence with *Japan*, *Redso*, and *Corea*; the Islands in the *Pacifick* and *Indian* Oceans; the Countries discovered Southward of the Equator, to *California* on the North Side, and perhaps several other Lands and Islands not yet discovered.

The Belief of which, if Experience did not confirm to us, might be rendered probable from the Disposition of the Terraqueous Globe; for we have a kind of moral Certainty, that there must be either a great Continent, or considerable Islands to the Westward of *America*, in order to constitute the Equipoise, and they too must lie to the North, that is under those Parallels of Latitude, between *California* and *Japan*, which Situation is very advantageous, as standing in need of our Commodities: More especially the Iron and Woollen Manufactures; and consequently this of all others would be a Discovery the most profitable to us as it would extend our Navigation, increase our Shipping, enrich these Kingdoms, be a means of discharging our National Debts, export our Manufactures, and employ our Poor; in short, the Utility of such Discovery is so obvious as to admit of no Controversy.

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The Method hitherto followed to accomplish this Design, has been by searching for it in *Davis's Straits* and *Hudson's Bay*; the former has been thought impracticable, from its stretching too far to the Northward, and being greatly embarrassed with Ice ; but the late Accounts published by the *Danes*, who resided many Years in *Groenland*, and travelled to the Head of that Streight, convince us that no Passage can be expected that Way, since it was found to grow so narrow, as to afford no Expectation of a Streight into another Sea : The latter has likewise been attended with considerable Difficulties and Obstructions, from the Endeavours of the *Hudson's Bay Company* to frustrate this Attempt : However, all the Trials that have been made, are so far from destroying the Probability of a Passage existing. that they in effect establish it, by furnishing new Lights and Arguments that confirm this Opinion.

Amongst other Methods that have been proposed for the finding this Passage, that of going round by *Cape Horn* has been hinted at by some of our greatest Voyagers, though the Searching for it in that way, labours under great Difficulties from the Length of the Passage, and the want of Friendly Ports to stop at on Occasion, since even in Time of Peace, no Favour can be expected from those who look upon that Discovery, as dangerous to their own Empire.

That therefore which seems the safest and most likely to prove successful, is to proceed by the *Cape of Good Hope* to the *East-Indies*, and from thence to the Port of *Canton* in *China*, where the Ships employed in this Service may refit, and wait the proper Season, and may then stretch over to the opposite Coast of *America* in higher Latitudes, and consequently in a much shorter Space of Time, were it requisite, than the Annual Voyages performed from *Manila* to *Aquapulca* by the *Spaniards*, whatever Countries lie between the two Continents in this Transit may be discovered, and a North West Passage attempted on that Side, where it is probable the Weather is milder, and the Seas clearer of Ice. A Passage, if such there be, more visible, as the Tide must flow into it, and the Breadth of the Continent of *North America*, may easily be known, from thence the Length of the Passage will necessarily appear, or what Encouragement there is for pursuing it.

I have said that the Seas on the West Side of that Coast are more open, and the Weather milder than upon the East Side ; my  
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Reasons for which I have drawn from Instances of the like kind in other Parts. We know in our Colonies of *Virginia* and *Carolina*, that they have very intense Frost, and great Quantities of Ice in the Winter Season, which they are free from in *Portugal*, though under the same Degree of Latitude. Again, in the Gulf of *Corea*, according to the most authentic Accounts, the Northern Part of that Gulf is impassable for several Months, by means of great Quantities of Ice generated there, though lying yet farther to the Southward; and that *Asia* has ~~a~~ Connection with *America*, as was formerly supposed, and would have deprived us intirely of any Hopes of a Passage, has sufficiently been exploded by the late Discoveries of the *Russians* in *Kamskatka*; wherein they have actually fixed the true Longitude of the North East Point of that Land by a *Lunar Eclipse*, which makes the Distance from the Extremity of *Asia* to the Eastward to the Part of *California* known, no more than a Run equal to five or six hundred Leagues.

The *Russians*, after sailing fourteen or fifteen Days to the Eastward, by their Accounts discovered other Land, where Capt. *Berbings* went ashore, who had the Command of that Expedition; this proves to us, that there are Countries lying near the Course proposed, convenient to put into in the Passage, should there be a Necessity for it, and we may reasonably conclude, that those Countries are inhabited, since we know that all Countries in the same Situation are; we know that *California* is populous, that its Inhabitants are friendly, affable and inclinable to traffick with Foreigners; that its Land is fertile, and may abound with such Commodities, as would afford a very beneficial Commerce to this Nation.

These Observations may help to remove the Doubts, whether there were such Countries or not, so capable of facilitating our Discoveries, and encreasing our Commerce.

This last Method of attempting the Discovery, I may therefore venture to affirm, is the safest, and more proper than any other that has been offered, because the first Part of the Voyage is known and easy, and though of a great length, yet as the Crew may have time to refresh, and may, if Occasion requires, be recruited, the Hardships cannot be great; and should the Northern Part of *America* upon Examination, prove an *Archipelago* of Islands, with a Passage practicable through them into the North Seas, the Vessels, having the Advantage of the proper Season, may speedily and safely return to *England*, as they

they would then have the Advantage of passing from unknown into known Seas; and even should this fail, and the Continent there appear to be a narrow Isthmus, it would be of some Consequence to discover it, as a Colony might be fixed on the other Side, and a Trade carried on over Land, as is the Case at *Porto Bello*, more especially, if the same Method of Carriage was practised there as in *Russia*; we know that most of the Hemp, and other Commodities brought hither from that Country, is carried by means of Sledges from the Countries about the *Ukraine* to *Petersburgh*, at the Rate of Five Shillings a Ton for a thousand Miles, which supposing the Price of Money to be ten Times greater in those Parts than in ours, it would advance the Carriage to but Half a Crown a Hundred; which is a Fact well known by our *Russia* Merchants.

To Proposals of this Nature, may be objected the Danger and Expence. As to the former, we know Ignorance, Irresolution and Negligence are its Parents, and that the more Knowledge, Vigilance and Experience we have, the fewer Dangers and Difficulties we meet with, because we are hence furnished with Means to avoid them. What was a frightful and hazardous Navigation to our Ancestors, from our superior Lights is rendered familiar and easy to us; and as to the latter, the Loss to the Nation is nothing, the Expence to the Government trifling, the Advantages that may reasonably be expected from it numerous and considerable, and the Obstacles and Inconveniences few, and surmountable.

Let its Consequences be what they will, it must do Honour to us, as a Maritime Power, correct Geography, produce bold and experienced Officers, employ our Seamen, revive a Spirit of Discovery, and its Attendant an Extension of Trade, or put an End to our Dreams about such Countries and Passages, if in reality they are but Dreams. A Necessity for striking out somewhat of this sort, does not afford greater Hopes of its being attempted, than the Inclination his Majesty has hitherto shewn to approve Undertakings of this kind, the Parliament's Regard to it, by proposing a Reward for the Discoverer. The Lords of the Admiralty have always lent their Assistance, and the Nation in general have ever expected great Benefits from it, when its Expediency is so universally confessed, and that the Legislature have so much at Heart, the Improvement, and Extension of Commerce, as is manifest in the Settlement of *Hallifax* in *Nova-Scotia*; the extraordinary Premiums granted for promoting the *Green-*  
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*land* Trade ; their Attention to the *British* Fishery ; and the Bounties given on Exportation of our Manufactures ; it is natural to suppose, a Scheme of this Sort, may be looked on, to merit some Regard.

Such Enterprizes were productive of our present Greatness, and such are necessary to preserve it. I believe it will be allowed by all thinking People, that no one Scheme can be so well adapted to the Temper and Genius of the *English*, who are naturally active and enterprizing, nothing can make the present Times more remarkable, the Government more esteemed, the People more contented, and the Nation more respected by Foreigners. The great Queen *Elizabeth* considered Projects of this kind in this very Light ; no Crowned Head ever encouraged them more, nor did any ever benefit more by them ; they employed many, but united most of her Subjects ; nor were these Considerations less prevalent with her, than the Regard she had for Posterity ; she planted, and we gather the Fruits of her Labours.

We know, that the Crown of *France*, from a Point of Glory, sent Mathematicians to the Extremity of the Northern Continent, and to the Equator, to fix the Measure of a Degree of an Arc of the Meridian, or in other Words, to verify the sagacious Conjecture of Sir *Isaac Newton*. The Crown of *Russia*, from a Point of Policy, has prosecuted Discoveries at a prodigious Expence by Sea and Land, to the utmost Limits of that vast Empire, which stretches within thirty-five Degrees of *Cape Blanco* in *California*. The Crown of *Sweden* from a Point of Profit, has attempted, and established a Trade to the *East-Indies*. Is it not therefore reasonable to expect, that where Honour, Policy and Profit all concur, the Crown of *Great Britain* should countenance a Proposal so manifestly advantageous, and so free from any considerable Obstacles ?



