

WHEAT (CANADA).

—No. 1.—

(No. 83.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from Lord *Stanley* to the Right Honourable
Sir *Charles Bagot*, G.C.B.

Sir,

Downing-street, 2 March 1842.

IN the anxious consideration which it has been the duty of Her Majesty's Government to give to the important and complicated question of the importation of corn into this country, they have, of course, not overlooked the interest which is felt in this question by the province of Canada, and which has been expressed in Memorials from the legislative body, and from other parties, addressed to Her Majesty and the Legislature of this country, and although in present circumstances Her Majesty's Government have not felt themselves justified in recommending to Parliament a compliance with the general request of the various memorialists, that Canadian corn and flour should be imported at a nominal duty into the United Kingdom, I trust that the steps which we have taken, and the grounds upon which we have declined to advance further in the same direction, will convince the people of Canada that the course which we have pursued has been dictated by no unfriendly feeling towards the interests of Canada, and especially of Canadian agriculture.

The steps which have been taken, so far as they go, have been decidedly in favour of those interests. By the law, as it has hitherto stood, Canadian wheat and wheat flour have been admissible into Great Britain at a rate of duty estimated at 5s. per quarter, until the price in the English market reached 67s., at which amount the duty fell to 6d. By the Bill which is now before Parliament, the duty of 5s. is leviable only while the price is below 55s., and at 58s. falls to 1s. only. But in addition to this reduction in the amount of price at which the lower duty becomes payable, it is proposed to take off the restriction which has hitherto been imposed upon the importation of Canadian flour into Ireland, and thus to open a new market to that which may justly be considered as one of the manufactures of Canada.

In the measures which they have adopted, not without the most anxious attention to the various interests involved, Her Majesty's Government have been desirous, while they gave a general facility of admission to the British market, of disturbing as little as possible the relative advantages possessed by the colonial and foreign suppliers of that market. In this sense, while they have continued to the Channel Islands the facilities which they have heretofore enjoyed, of a free importation of their own produce (limited as it necessarily is in extent) into Great Britain, together with the means which they at present enjoy, of having their own supplies furnished from the neighbouring and cheaper market, they have not felt themselves called upon to remove from the Isle of Man the restrictions which have been recently imposed on that island, as to its foreign imports, while it possesses the advantages of an unrestricted commerce with Great Britain. The same principle has guided Her Majesty's Government in the course which they have felt it their duty to pursue with regard to Canada.

It is impossible to be more fully convinced than are the Members of Her Majesty's Government of the importance to the interests, both of the colony and of the mother country, of maintaining between the two the most unrestricted freedom of commercial intercourse. Even a cursory examination of facts and figures must demonstrate the value to be attached in a commercial, and much more in a moral and political, point of view to the continuance and improvement of that rapidly-increasing intercourse; and Her Majesty's Government would have had much less difficulty in approaching the question of an unrestricted admission of Canadian wheat and flour into the British markets, if it had been in their power to look at that question as one of intercourse between Great Britain and her most important colony, and independent of all considerations of foreign trade. But it was impossible for Her Majesty's Government so to regard it,—it was impossible that they should not advert to the geographical position of Canada, in

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