

THE POST-OFFICE.

(To the Editor of the St. John Globe.)

CUSTOM HOUSE, SAINT JOHN, N. B.,
23rd December, 1877.

SIR,—I noticed in a recent number of your paper some remarks reflecting on the management of the Post-Office, with reference to the transmission of mails between Ottawa and this city which under existing arrangements, is very unsatisfactory to such of the public as have communications passing between those places.

As I have recently given some attention to this subject, and have brought it under the notice of the Postmaster-General at Ottawa and his very able deputy, I will, with your permission, state the cause of this great delay which takes place in forwarding these mails to their destination, and thus enable you to judge how far the Post-Office authorities are to blame in the matter.

When I informed the Postmaster-General of the unsatisfactory state of this particular branch of the Post-Office service, he expressed himself most anxious to remedy any difficulty which existed, and place it on the most efficient footing, so soon as it was ascertained where the delay or difficulty occurred, and for that purpose he immediately despatched an officer of the department along the line to enquire and report accordingly. That officer has been here, I believe, and is now on his way back to Ottawa, and will no doubt be able to give such information as will tend to remove any cause of complaint for the future.

On Saturday, the 14th instant, at 1 30 P.M., I started from Ottawa in company with the mail bags for St. John and Halifax, which were made up, with the view of being forwarded to Portland in time for the sailing of the steamer *New Brunswick* for St. John; but on my arrival at the Prescott Junction at 4 30 P.M., I found that the down train on the Grand Trunk from Toronto to Montreal which was due at 5 20 P.M., would not be in for some time, and that until that train arrived, the passengers and mails could not proceed on their journey towards Montreal. On making enquiry, I learned that the trains had frequently been behind time of late, owing to the severe frost and the consequent danger of breaking the rails, or running off the track when going at their ordinary speed. The train arrived at Prescott about 7 30 P.M., and instead of arriving at the Junction near Montreal at 10 30 P.M. the time when it was due, it did not arrive until 2 A.M. on Sunday, four hours behind time and too late to make the connection with the train which left Montreal for Island Pond and Portland at 10 10 P.M. on Saturday night. The mails and passengers were consequently detained at Montreal until Monday at 2 P.M., when they started for Island Pond, arriving there about 10 30 on Monday evening. The train proceeded no further that night, and at 7 A.M. on Tuesday morning the train went on to Portland, where it arrived at 2 15 P.M., too late for the steamer *New Brunswick*, which left on Monday evening.

The mails for St. John were left at the Danville Junction, 27 miles from Portland, and forwarded to Bangor at 2 40 P.M. on Tuesday, arriving at 8 P.M. At 9 30 on Tuesday evening they were despatched from Bangor for Calais by stage, arriving at the latter place about 7 30 P.M. on Wednesday; but on arriving at Calais I found that the mail stage for St. John had left at 5 P.M., the contract hour for starting, thus leaving all the mails from the States and Canada lying at Calais until the following evening (Thursday) at 6 o'clock, when they were duly forwarded to St. John, reaching this city at 10 A.M. Friday.

The distance travelled was 710 miles, and the time consumed in performing the journey was five days and 21 hours, or an average of about five miles an hour all the way through.

You will no doubt perceive from this statement that the principal difficulty in the matter was the Grand Trunk train being four hours behind time on its arrival at Montreal, and consequently breaking the connection for Portland by which arrangement the mail lay over at Montreal for 36 hours, and at Island Pond for nine hours. The next difficulty was the want of connection at Calais by which arrangement it lay over there for nearly 22 hours.

I do not suppose the Post-Office authorities could reasonably be blamed for the principal delay at Montreal occasioned by the Grand Trunk Railway trains failing to make the necessary connections as set forth in their time tables; but I presume it would not require much ingenuity on the part of the Post-Office authorities here to make such arrangements as would ensure the prompt transmission of the American and Canadian mails from Calais to St. John immediately after their arrival at the former place, instead of allowing them to remain as at present nearly a whole day within 80 miles of the city. If the St. John mails were forwarded from Ottawa during the winter months by the night train leaving at 10 o'clock, instead of the afternoon train, it would ensure the necessary connection at Prescott and Montreal, and if a proper connection was made at Calais, the difficulty would be remedied, and the mails would be transmitted between Ottawa and St. John, either by way of Portland per steamer or Bangor by land, in less than four days. In the summer time when there are steamers running between St. John and Portland two or three times a week, there is no cause of complaint, as letters marked "via Portland" are carried between this city and Ottawa in six hours.

As I am sure that the Postmaster-General and his deputy are both most anxious to place the transmission of the mails between Ottawa and New Brunswick on the most efficient footing, I feel confident that the complaints alluded to will receive the most prompt attention at their hands, as soon as they become informed of the causes of delay.

When in Ottawa recently, I also brought under the notice of these gentlemen the very unsatisfactory state of the Mail communication between New Brunswick

and the West Indies, and suggested that a sealed Mail bag should be made up at St. John, addressed to the British Postal Agent at St. Thomas and despatched by the Brazilian boat which leaves New York for that Island on the 23rd of each month, and on its arrival there its contents would be re-distributed by the Intercolonial Mail steamers which leave St. Thomas about the 2nd and 17th of every month. This plan was submitted by me after my return from the West Indies last year to the Governor of New Brunswick, and the consent of the Postmasters-General in London and Washington was subsequently obtained through the Hon. Mr. McMillan, our late Postmaster-General in this Province, for its being carried into operation. I have now received a telegram from the Deputy Postmaster General at Ottawa, announcing that the consent of the Post Office authorities at Washington has been received, allowing letters from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia for the West Indies to be forwarded via New York by the United States mail steamers, on prepayment at the places where the letters are mailed of the same rates (in gold) which would be charged on similar letters if mailed in the United States, thus putting our letters on as favorable a footing as letters transmitted to these countries by the people of the States. Notice of this liberal concession on the part of the Post Office authorities at Washington will be made public in a few days, and when it is fairly in operation, it will be found, I believe, to be of great service to our West India trade. The Cunard boat between Halifax, Bermuda and St. Thomas will still continue for some time yet to carry mails between these places every four weeks, until an improved system of mail communication can be organized between the Dominion of Canada and the West Indies. The principal objection to the existing arrangement of transmitting the mail to and from the West Indies via Halifax and Bermuda by the Cunard boat, is the want of connection at St. Thomas with the distribution of the intercolonial mails, so that it not infrequently happens that from ten to fourteen weeks elapse before an answer is received to letters sent from this Province to the West Indies, which is a great drawback to our increasing West India trade.

Your obedient servant,

WM. SMITH, Controller, &c.

A Washington correspondent says that it is intended, after the present recess, to bring before Congress a measure for the establishment of an international coinage. Upon this the *New York Times* remarks:—

Experience, it must be admitted, does not warrant an expectation of very early results in favour of any change which interferes materially with business customs or the daily dealings of a people. The British delegates to the Paris conference were not unwise in qualifying their approval of its recommendations with the remark that "until it should be incontrovertibly demonstrated that the adoption of a new system offered superior advantages justifying the abandonment of that which was approved by experience and rooted in the habits of the people, the British Government could not take the initiative in assimilating its money with that of the nations of the continent." With Sir John Bowring's barren labour before their eyes, they doubtless deemed the reservation expedient. For a quarter of a century, or thereabout, he has toiled to educate the popular and official mind of England up to the standard of the decimal system. Its superiority over the arbitrary pound, shillings and pence has from the first been conceded by the intelligence of the country; Chambers of Commerce have memorialized Parliament in favour of the reform, and the pundits of scientific and statistical associations have demonstrated its advantages. Still the British people have clung to their old system with all its drawbacks; and the issue of silver coin denominated the florin, equal in value to one-tenth of a pound, is the only tangible product of twenty-five years' discussion. This country has a lesson of its own to tell on a similar subject. The Cental system was inaugurated not many months ago as an improvement upon the varying standards of weight and measure. Chambers of Commerce were loud in its praise, and there really seemed to be some ground for believing that it would speedily come into general use at the great seats of trade. But what is the fact? The old system, with its manifold defects, is adhered to by the people everywhere, and the Cental system, notwithstanding its theoretical advantages, has practically collapsed. With these instances of the difficulty which both Britain and the United States have experienced in efforts to overcome the established routine, we cannot accept any plan of monetary unification with the hopefulness which characterises Mr. Huggles' report.

The question is, however, too important to be entirely abandoned because of the obstacles which surround it. In our home relations it has no place, since the decimal system, which we have, is in principle that which the Conference proposed to make universal. But the commerce of nations would be facilitated, and therefore benefited by the change. The differences that exist between the coinages of countries may not embarrass international trade, but they give rise to intricate exchanges and discounts which entail inconvenience and loss. Exchange brokers reap a harvest which the merchants should not be compelled to lose; and there is nothing extravagant in the supposition that commercial nations will in due time be willing to modify their coinages in a manner that shall render intercourse simpler and cheaper. Civilization points unerringly to the result desired by Mr. Sherman—when the world shall "compute the value of all productions by the same standard, measure by the same yard or metre, and weigh by the same scales;" but we must wait awhile for its realization.

THE DOMINION OF CANADA AND THE RECIPROCAL TREATY.

(From Hunt's Merchants' Magazine)

A BSORBED as we are in the regulation of our own internal affairs, after the derangements of a great war, it is not surprising that we should overlook the importance of cultivating advantageous relations with our neighbours. It is nevertheless a fact we can ill afford to ignore, that on our northern frontier we have a young nationality, rapidly growing in population and rising commercial importance. Our misfortunes have indirectly advantaged Canada; for while the war has augmented the burthens of our people and diminished the profits of industry, our neighbours have escaped these ill fortunes and thus gained a higher vantage ground in competing with us for the markets and the surplus population of the Old World. The Dominion of Canada now occupies the same position, in respect to foreign trade, we occupied in 1798, while its population is about 600,000 less. Compared with our rapid growth, its increase in population may appear trivial, but its increase, nevertheless, is equal to our own at the same stage of our history. Judging from the progress of the provinces since 1860, it is not to be deemed among the improbabilities of the future that fifty years hence the population of the united provinces may equal that of the United States at the date of our last census. It is estimated by the Canadian authorities that since 1831 the population of all the provinces combined has increased from 3,800,000 to about 4,000,000; and although this increase may not be considered in itself as specially important, yet it indicates a ratio of progress which at no very remote period is destined to give to our neighbours a commanding national importance. The following statement shows the area of the respective provinces, their productions in 1861, and the estimated population in 1867, as published in the Canadian reports:—

	Area.		Population, 1866.		P'ct'n. Est. Jan. 1 1867.
	Square Miles.	Cath. & For-eign.	Pop'n.	For-eign.	
Ontario (U.C.)	121,290	258,141	484,128	1,896,091	1,802,066
Quebec (L.C.)	210,020	943,253	93,641	1,111,566	1,288,880
N. Brunswick.	27,156	76,238	43,881	252,047	295,084
Nova Scotia.	18,660	86,281	31,522	330,867	338,781
Existing					
Dominion	377,045	1,872,913	668,172	8,090,561	8,754,081
Prince Edward	2,100	35,852	13,257	80,857	91,448
Newfoundland	40,200	57,214	12,414	124,288	130,000
Projected					
Dominion	419,345	1,665,979	678,843	8,295,706	9,376,244

The commerce of the Dominion is large compared with its population. The combined imports and exports of the former Province of Canada, for the last fiscal year, amounted to \$15,000,000, which is equivalent to about \$34 per head of population. In 1860 the foreign commerce of the United States averaged \$27 per capita. This comparison shows great vigour and prosperity on the part of our neighbours. The standing of the New Dominion in respect to tonnage and foreign commerce is shown by the following statement:—

	COMMERCE AND TONNAGE; AVERAGE 5 YEARS, '61-'66.			
	Tonnage Cleared.	Entered.	Exports.	Commerce.
Canada	953,124	941,331	\$36,081,436	\$40,493,535
New Brunswick	721,727	674,802	4,798,913	7,166,580
Nova Scotia	772,071	799,929	6,794,259	10,447,193
Existing	2,446,928	2,545,912	47,662,623	58,307,318
Prince Edward	172,657	151,405	1,288,369	1,433,551
Newfoundland	182,319	148,834	5,487,331	5,218,416
Projected	2,781,844	2,745,151	4,313,328	64,759,324

The tonnage above given for Canada is the seaward tonnage; besides which there cleared from inland ports to the United States, on the average of the same five years, 8,291,069 tons, and entered at inland ports from the United States 3,144,207 tons. This is exclusive of ferry navigation.

Thus far the Provinces have conducted their finances with commendable economy. Their total debts amount to about \$75,000,000; an aggregate it is true, equal to the whole debt of the United States seven years ago, but yet less than one-fifth the rate per capita of the present Federal debt of this country. The total governmental expenditures of the Provinces are, in round numbers, \$15,000,000, which, with a population of four millions, amounts to a burthen of \$3.75 per head of the population. Our own Federal taxation at present averages \$13.95 per capita, to say nothing of our State burthens. As illustrating the finances of the several sections of the Dominion, we present the following statement of receipts, expenditures, and debts:—

	REVENUE, EXPENDITURES, DEBT, ETC., 1865 (EXCLUSIVE OF LOAN ACCOUNT).	
	Receipts.	Expenditures.
Canada	\$4,968,716	10,435,269
New Brunswick	776,941	1,070,604
Nova Scotia	1,047,987	1,517,306
Existing	6,793,644	13,023,169
Prince Edward	163,648	217,732
Newfoundland	427,376	482,460
Projected	7,384,668	13,723,361

In reviewing the resources and condition of the Dominion, we have purposely kept in view our own relative position in the respective details, because it appears to be thought good national policy to exclude our neighbours to a certain extent from commercial intercourse with the United States. The physical conditions of Canada correspond very closely with those of the most active and prosperous sections of our own country. Its natural conditions, for trading in the products of the forest, the field and the sea, also compare favourably with our own; while, as respects the governmental burthens—a matter bearing very essentially upon the inducements to both labour and