

## NAVIGATION OF THE ST. LAWRENCE.

We are glad to find the press of the Upper Province coming out so boldly in favour of the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence. The article we give below is from the *Hamilton Spectator*, and besides setting forth the views we believe to be generally entertained as to the operation of the Navigation Laws, contains some very sensible remarks on the necessity of immediate action on our parts to obtain their repeal. This is the great point now to which the energies of the country ought to be directed. Whilst the St. Lawrence is closed to the enterprise of foreigners, our trade must remain paralyzed, and every interest in the country suffer. But the Navigation Laws will not be modified without such action is taken by the Colony itself as will convince the British Government of the earnestness with which our claims are made, and necessity of immediately yielding to them. In order to produce this impression, an opportunity should be given to every district in the province to express its opinion by a memorial to the Government on the subject. It is also suggested that there should be a Conviction of the principal men of the province at some central spot to be agreed on, at which the state of the Trade of the country should be taken into consideration, and a strong appeal made to the Home Government for the immediate removal of such restrictions as now weigh upon us. It is impossible that such representations should not carry great weight, whilst the union of so many leading men might be productive of good results not now foreseen. It is evident, indeed, that unless some such exertion is made, the province must suffer severely. Already the effect of our singular position is being felt in the general depression of trade, and a belief in the impossibility of competing, under the present scale of duties, with foreign countries. Whilst the difference of freight between New York and Montreal equals the amount of protection received, it is evident—even if everything else were equal—we should have hard work to maintain our position; and how must the case be when we know, as we do know, that under every other head—in respect to insurance, risk, delay, &c.—we labour under the most serious disadvantages? The fact is, indeed, as plain as the sun at noon-day, that unless these Navigation Laws are repealed the trade of Canada must seek other channels, and the value of the province to the mother country, as well as its ability to help itself, be seriously interfered with.

Such being the case, we cannot too earnestly impress on our Free-Trade friends the necessity of exerting themselves in their different localities to obtain an expression of public opinion against these laws; and we do not know a better way in which they can do this than by forming Branch Associations, such as we have often referred to. These Branch Associations, besides being the means of diffusing information, would enable them at any time to meet and record their opinions on the questions now being agitated, and would in course of time form a most simple but powerful machinery for the furtherance of Free-Trade views. Being non-political, they would enable men of the most dissimilar opinions in other respects, to come together; and viewed even in this light, could scarcely fail in the long run to have a salutary effect upon the public mind in the colony. But there must be no delay. Whatever is done must be done promptly, so that at the commencement of another year we may find ourselves in a position to take advantage of the small protection still left in our favour, which at present it is evident we cannot do.

As we have before observed, a great responsibility rests in this matter on the different Boards of Trade. It is their duty to watch over the interests of commerce, and if they should fail to take a decided course at the present moment, they will have most culpably failed in that duty. At Toronto, as we showed last week, the Board of Trade has come forward boldly to denounce the Navigation Laws; and we now call on every other Board of Trade in the province to follow its example. Let them at once memorialize the Government in strong terms to place the trade of the province in that position in which it has a right to expect to be placed, and without which neither colony nor mother country can derive any advantage from the connexion. Nor will memorializing alone do. Toronto in this respect has set an excellent example, by calling in the assistance of the District Agricultural Society, and obtaining from it what must be regarded as an expression of opinion against all restrictive laws. We trust that this example will be followed, and that the constituencies generally will not rest satisfied in merely recording their opinions, but that they will make their representatives express those opinions for them when they shall meet in the next session of Parliament. Up to the present time, the tendency of legislation has been all in the other direction; but a new era has now arrived, and henceforth every man who is not prepared to give in his adherence to the Free-Trade cause, must be declared unfit to have a seat in Parliament.

With these remarks, we give the article to which we referred in commencing, from the *Hamilton Spectator*, only omitting one paragraph, in which the writer makes a pointed charge against

the Free-Traders, which he must have known, had he reflected for a moment, he could not support:—

NAVIGATION OF THE ST. LAWRENCE.—Now that the Corn Law measures of Sir Robert Peel have been perfected, and the effects are becoming every day more apparent, in the decline of produce in the British market, the Free-Traders of Canada appear to have awakened to a consideration of the serious effects this law must have upon the trade and agriculture of the Colony, and, in alarm, they are setting themselves to work to obtain some modification of the restrictions under which we at present labour, by which we may be placed on an equality with foreign countries. As the *Spectator* has ever strenuously opposed the action of the Free-Traders heretofore, it may appear somewhat surprising that we should now agree with them on a particular question. But as the effect which a full expression of colonial opinion on the Corn Bill, made at the proper time, might have had, must now be lost, there can be no question of the propriety, indeed actual necessity, of obtaining the removal of any existing restrictions, if the rapidly increasing carrying trade of the province is to continue to proceed through its natural channel. No lung shot of the repeal of the Navigation Laws, so far as the St. Lawrence is concerned, will secure this result; and we confess that our anticipations of obtaining such a privilege, for many years to come, are not of the most sanguine. The influence of British ship-owners and manufacturers has ever been more felt in Downing-Street, than the representations of the people of this distant part of the empire. Whether this arose from the former having the ear of the Minister, and a better opportunity of stating their wishes, we cannot divine; but it is quite certain that the grievances under which the inhabitants of Canada have for a long time suffered, and which have been stated both through their representatives in Parliament and the public press, have been treated with marked neglect. The management of the Post-Office Department, notwithstanding the repeated complaints made, sufficiently corroborates this statement. If, therefore, so little attention was made to a matter that affects the colonies alone, what reason have we to expect that a representation now, on another subject, will have more effect, when it comes into direct contact with a rich and influential portion of the people of Great Britain?

As a matter of right and justice, the free and unrestricted navigation of the St. Lawrence should not for a moment be withheld; as a question of diplomacy, it may give rise to many a dry and tedious despatch, before the subject is taken up on its merits. The people of Canada now contend for the right of choosing the best and cheapest route to the ocean, in return for being deprived of the protection they enjoyed in the British market. It is by no means certain that the St. Lawrence is the preferable route, but common justice cannot withhold from us the opportunity of testing, and choosing for ourselves. If, after the Navigation Laws are repealed, the merchant finds he has to pay more for sending his freight to market, and the farmer still loses the additional price on his produce that is paid for transportation, then they must turn their attention to the canals of the Americans. But they wish first to have an opportunity of judging of their own route, divested of all superfluous tolls, monopolies, and restrictions. If the experiment prove satisfactory, there may be no necessity for cultivating a better business acquaintance with our neighbours.

A Memorial on the subject of the Navigation Laws has been adopted by the Toronto Board of Trade, and a similar paper by the Board of Montreal. The first-named document, which embodies the sentiments of both, will be found in our columns to-day. The object is simply to point out the advantages the Canadian formerly enjoyed, and the ruinous position in which he will be placed unless the navigation of the St. Lawrence be thrown open. The question is simple enough, and as the granting of the privilege would only give us a fair opportunity of entering into competition with strangers in the markets of Great Britain, we hope that other Boards and Associations, and the people generally, will speak out upon the subject, without loss of time. The expression of a single Board of Trade, or a particular locality, will have very little effect, whilst the earnest representations of an undivided people may be too powerful to resist. When we have been deprived of every advantage formerly enjoyed, there can be little delicacy in demanding to be placed in a position in which we can do something to save ourselves from total ruin.

With respect to the subject of Differential Duties, the same action might be urged; but as the British Government have already declared that the imposition of a revenue for protection is no longer desired, we think they will abolish these duties very speedily, of their own free will. But, after all, it is better to represent the whole grievances under which we labour, in order to ensure the mitigation of a part. Public meetings have been held on less important matters, and a similar proceeding now might be advisable, both to obtain a general expression of opinion, and to show the Home Government we are in earnest in our representation.

## LAKE ST. PETER.

In our number of the 15th inst., we referred to the stoppage of the deepening of a channel through Lake St. Peter, and briefly pointed out the injury to the trade of Montreal which it was calculated to effect. The public press of this city has followed in our wake, and we observe in the *Montreal Gazette* of 26th instant, a communication on the subject, signed THE MANY, which with the other attacks on the Government, has apparently elicited a reply from the organ, in defence of its principals.

The defence is rather oracular, to wit:—that "agitation has stopped the work"; the "Parliamentary Committee," are complained of as too active; the "merchants of Montreal and the inhabitants generally," as too passive; and therefore, the tunate Government—that "much-loaded animal," as its defender rather irreverently styles it, magnanimously resolves—to do nothing!