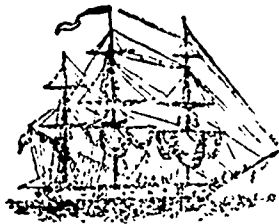


# CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 2ND JANUARY, 1847.

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## THE CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 2ND JANUARY, 1847.

### THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE.

The year 1846 has run its course, and we have entered on another of those minute and imaginary divisions of time by which the progress of human existence is marked. At such a time it is the custom to commence by wishing the stranger all sorts of imaginary honors, and we will not depart from so honored and courteous an observance. We do, indeed, hope that the events which are as yet in the womb of time, and which 1847 is destined to bring forth, will be auspicious, and that the approaching year will see vast progress made in the accomplishment of plans having for their object the benefit of the whole human race. We would vain hope that the coming year will see an end put to the selfish systems by which nations have cut themselves off from surrounding nations, and that the good work commenced in 1846 will be brought to a successful conclusion in 1847. Though there is much to accomplish, we do not despair. When we look back and see what has been done, and when we note the spirit that is at work throughout the world, we have every reason to be satisfied. Impelled by the example of England, the other great commercial countries are waiting but an opportunity to throw down their old trading restrictions and adapt a new, and more healthful, and more humanizing policy.

The year that has passed away will stand for ever memorable in our annals,—scarcely less memorable than those great eras which mark the accomplishment of national rights, which are the groundwork of our civil freedom. The world had never seen before so great a revolution carried out by such peaceful and yet such mighty means; and the world has learnt from that triumph, a lesson which cannot be too deeply studied. The change has been followed too by events which seemed almost ordained to prove its necessity and wisdom. But for the supplies of food received under a Free Trade tariff, England and Ireland would, at this moment, be suffering the horrors of a famine—a famine created not because the world does not supply sufficient food for its inhabitants, but because the absurd policy of Governments would not allow that food to find its way into the hands of their starving people. Ought not this fact to prove a lesson to legislators how they tamper with natural laws, and attempt by artificial expedients to make that dear which Providence, through the industry of man, intended should be abundant?

The year 1847 finds the world prepared to enter more fully on the new course, and extend the field of national and individual enterprise. It finds nations, with one or two unfortunate exceptions, at peace, and presents the human mind bent on creating physical revolutions by the means of science, that may well create wonder and amazement. Canada, we are glad to say, has caught something of this spirit, and has engaged, though somewhat tardily, in the formation of railroads and magnetic telegraphs that are to connect her more closely in herself, and more intimately with her neighbours. But Canada has more to do than even these inventions, great as they are, present. She too, is feeling the influence of a restrictive commercial system, which devolves on her burthen

which it is neither to her own interest nor to that of the parent state that she should bear. The new year, therefore, opens to her new prospects. It points out to her a much wider field of action than she has yet enjoyed, and, under a system of Free Trade, such a development of her resources as, whilst it will contribute to her own prosperity, will not add less to that of the great empire under whose protection it is her blessing to be.

Thus on all hands would we hope that the sun which is just now bursting on us, will continue to spread a glorious light to its close, and that with the progress of a new order of ideas, we shall find ourselves at the end of eighteen hundred and forty-seven, as at the end of eighteen hundred and forty-six, grateful for the past, proud of the present, and hopeful for the future.

### THE PROVINCIAL TARIFF.

In our last article on this subject we reviewed the importations of Spirits and Wines since 1839 to 1845 inclusive, for the purpose of showing how the consumption of these important articles was affected by taxation; and we may recal to our readers' recollection that we established the following facts: 1st. That from 1839 to 1841 (the duty being then comparatively low) the quantity of imported spirits entered for home consumption was, on the average, 595,021 galls., while in the years 1843 to 1845 inclusive (the duty being then materially increased), the quantity entered for home consumption was reduced on the average to 369,738 galls., showing a falling off of 226,286 galls., or 40 per cent, per annum, in the consumption of imported spirits!

2nd. That as respects Wines, the quantity entered for home consumption in the first period, when the duties were comparatively low, was on the average 307,223 galls. per annum; and that in the second period, when the duties were materially enhanced, the quantity entered for home consumption was only on the average 284,018 galls., showing an average falling off in the consumption of 17,205 galls., or about 6 per cent per annum.

From these facts our readers will readily draw the conclusion that by false legislation their comforts and their commerce have been unnecessarily abridged, without at the same time improving the revenue of the country to anything like a commensurate degree, if indeed it can be shewn to have been improved at all.

We now come to compare the importations of Tea, Tobacco, Coffee, Molasses, and Salt.

Previously to 1812, the duties on Teas were 6d. cy. per lb. on Hyson, 2d. cy. per lb. on Bohea, and 4d. cy. per lb. on all other kinds; and their importation was prohibited except from Great Britain or a British possession, or from China direct, the consequence of which—that is the prohibition and the high duty together—was that the bulk of the Tea consumed in Canada, and particularly in the Upper Province, was introduced across the frontier by the agency of the smuggler, and of course paid no duty at all. This is a fact which was notorious at the time, and which we believe had great weight with the Legislature of the mother country when it consented to remove the prohibition. An anecdote which we have often heard may be mentioned here to illustrate the corrupting effects which that prohibition had upon the morals of our brethren in Western Canada, and indeed throughout the Province, but more particularly in the Western part of it, where the subject of our article resided. An extensive Tea-dealer of a city which shall be nameless, who was a magistrate, a pillar of the kirk, and above all, in a general sense, a man of exemplary character, was reproached by a friend for doing what he was notoriously known to be guilty of, namely, dealing in smuggled teas. He replied, "that he had a family to provide for, and that his conscience acquitted him of guilt in evading an odious law which was opposed to common sense and the first principles of human rights. For instance," said he, "the law allows me to go to New York to purchase my teas, which I do by a bill at six months' date, but compels me to ship them to England to be re-shipped to Canada, by which means the whole six months are generally expended before my teas reach