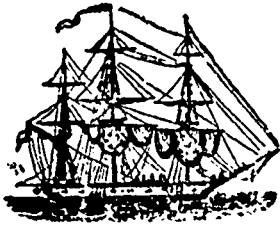


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 1847.

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CONTENTS.

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1.—Opinions of the Governor-General. | 7.—State of Ireland.—The Home Market. |
| 2.—Lord Elgin and the Free Trade Association. | 8.—Want of Faith in Principle. |
| 3.—Free Trade and the Portland Railway. | 9.—Miscellaneous Articles. |
| 4.—Hamilton Commercial Advertiser. | 10.—Intelligence—General and Local. |
| 5.—The Portland Railway. | 11.—The Markets. |
| 6.—Three Great Reforms. | 12.—Advertisements: |

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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 1847.

OPINIONS OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

"It is reported, on the authority of a passenger who crossed the Atlantic with Lord Elgin, that his Excellency expressed himself very freely in favor of three great measures, which would prove of incalculable importance to Canada. First, the free navigation of the River St. Lawrence; second, the consolidation of the Customs; and third, the remodelling of the Post Office after the British plan. Should his Excellency be able to carry out these measures, his administration will constitute a marked era in Canadian history."

The above paragraph from the *Montreal Witness* of the 1st inst., supposing it to proceed, as we presume it does, from a respectable and competent authority, conveys highly satisfactory information to the public mind, as to the views of the distinguished nobleman who, as the Representative of our Sovereign, has just assumed the government of this province. Not, be it understood, that we are in the habit of attaching much weight to reports of conversations given *ex parte*, without the *imprimatur* of all concerned. We hold, moreover, that the unauthorized publication of such conversations is a breach of confidence; and we are not sure that we are not to a certain degree *particeps criminis*, in giving additional circulation to the above extract. The unfairness towards the principal parties concerned, of such unsanctioned publications, has been signally manifested in the cases of the late Lords DURHAM, SYDENHAM, and METCALFE; all of whom, we firmly believe, on the knowledge that the falsehoods of the narrators would never be detected, have been made to utter sentiments which never fell from their lips.

We are quite disposed, however, to believe that the case now before is of a different nature, and to attach considerable weight to the opinions of Lord ELGIN, thus frankly and openly expressed, not under the impression that the report of these conversations furnishes any clue to the commercial policy hereafter to be adopted in this colony, since that must, in questions of a provincial character, mainly depend on those who may possess the confidence of the majority of the Provincial Legislature; whilst, in questions involving the Imperial authority, it is hardly probable that he would use any other medium than that which the Constitution points out, to communicate the views of the British Government.

As an authoritative exposition of the views of the Governor General, therefore, we attach no importance to any remarks which may have fallen from Lord Elgin during his passage, but as the views of a British nobleman, conversant with those of all parties in Britain on Colonial subjects, they are interesting to us all. They are also valuable, as marking the enlightened mind of the man, and as evincing his ardent desire to associate his fame and reputation with the prosperity and happiness of the people he is appointed to govern.

The answer of the Governor General to the address of the citizens of Montreal displays the same patriotic and lofty feelings, and has we believe been received with unmingled satisfaction throughout the community. The passage in which he refers to the extent of the resources of the province, and to their susceptibility of rapid development; to his desire "to aid in extending the trade—in drawing forth the agricultural and mineral wealth, and in improving the means of internal communication" of the country; breathes the very spirit which we could wish to see animate our rulers, and

leads us to indulge the hope that the commercial interests of the country will be no longer neglected or cast aside as subjects of secondary importance.

But here the question presents itself: Is the reply of the Governor General, which is generally looked on as a sort of programme of the performance we are to expect, to be considered as the production of that distinguished individual, or of his responsible advisers? This is a nut, for those who have been writing so "scholarly and wisely" on Responsible Government, to crack. We have our opinion, but the determination we made on establishing this paper, and in which we shall persist, not to discuss any questions connected with party politics, forbids us from expressing it. One thing is certain: if the reply be merely a confession of faith and a manifesto of the intentions of the Draper Administration, it loses much of its interest with the public, and all the hopes and expectations which the *quidnuncs* of each party have built on detached passages, vanish "like the baseless fabric of a vision." If, on the contrary, the reply be the veritable production of the Representative of Royalty, given without any consultation with his responsible advisers, a practice is established which may lead to awkward results. We may have the Governor General, at one moment, *ex mero motu*, publicly expressing opinions, which, the next, by the advice of his Executive Council, he may have as publicly to condemn. We shall not, for reasons already given, enlarge on this topic, which strikes us, however, as one of considerable importance.

Under any point of view, we repeat, that the terms of the reply are calculated to inspire us with hope as regards those measures of Commercial Reform, which we have, since the commencement of this paper, unceasingly advocated. The prominent reference to the resources of the country, and to the necessity of adopting proper measures for their development, implies, if it be the speech of the Minister, that some degree of attention has been given to the subject during the long recess, and we may consequently view it as a distinct pledge that some course of action, adapted in his opinion to the exigency of the case, will be proposed on the assembling of the Legislature. Assuming the reply as the expression of the individual opinion of the Governor, and comparing it with the language said to have been used by him on his passage out—with which it remarkably coincides—it points out distinctly three Commercial Reforms as likely to be attained:—the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence, the Repeal of the Differential Duties, and Remodelling of the Post Office. To these measures, when known to be backed by the influence of the Governor General—which is in this province at all times "a tower of strength"—we are satisfied there would not be the least whisper of objection. No Ministry would be weak or wicked enough to offer a shadow of opposition; all the miserable wire-drawn sophistries which the *Government organ* has put forth to defend the existing abuses, will, we doubt not, be laid aside, and their place supplied by glowing eulogiums on the mind which shall have effected these salutary reforms.

Nor do our hopes and expectations end here. That sense of justice which impelled the British Parliament to concede the power to our Legislature of withdrawing protection from the British manufacturer, must influence them to concede a similar power of legislation in reference to the British shipowner. The principle in both cases is identical; and we defy the most astute pleader to adduce a single argument for protection to the British shipowner, which does not apply with at least equal force to the British manufacturer. Our arguments, however, against the British Navigation Laws, as we have again and again shewn, are infinitely stronger than those against the Differential Duties: since, were the latter retained, the utmost loss we should suffer would be the being compelled to pay a little higher price for our articles of import; whereas, if the former were to be continued in full force, we are menaced with a far greater evil, namely, the deprivation of that intercourse with the Western States, to which we must hereafter look as perhaps our main resource, not only as regards our commerce but our finances.

We shall shortly again revert to this subject, since we hold it to be of such paramount importance that it must constantly be kept before the public eye; and the time is now rapidly approaching when, if ever, this incubus on our commercial energies must be shaken off.