

THE PROTECTIONISTS AND THE COLONIES.

(From the Manchester Guardian.)

As the success of the Corn Law becomes more and more certain all parties turn their attention to the discussion upon the New Tariff Bill, which must immediately succeed the Corn Bill. Canada and Canadian interests seem the chosen ground on which this battle is to be fought. Lord George Bentinck, and his able colleagues in opposition, Mr. D'Israeli, and Mr. Peter Borthwick, have done their best in Parliament to prepare for the onslaught; while their untiring ally out of doors, Mr. Isaac Buchanan, by means of slips from the *Scottish Reformers' Gazette*, continues to inundate the country with the most extraordinary trades against free-trade. The last production of this persevering gentleman, which has reached us, is a letter addressed to the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, at Hamilton, in Upper Canada. We have carefully perused this letter, in the hope of discovering some argument or fact, which would either defend the views of his party, or call from us a refutation. The document presents neither the one nor the other. There are two things, and only two, which we can distinctly draw from it: the one, an assertion, which, from its frequent repetition by this gentleman, we must suppose he, at least, believes; the other, a plain and welcome fact. The first is, that the free-trade apostacies of this country will be punished by the loss of its American colonies. In this gentleman's first letters, this was put forward guardedly, as a consequence to be feared; but, gradually, he has become stronger and stronger in the assertion, till at last he speaks of it as he would of the sun rising on the morrow—as a matter of unquestionable and admitted occurrence. He speaks of the time "when Canada is lost to the empire," as other men speak of the arrival of Christmas. The fact which Mr. Buchanan tells us in this letter is, that "the United States Transit Bill, allowing Upper Canada to send her flour to England, via New York, in bond, is an immense boon to you. You will save a dollar per barrel of the immense expense of transport hitherto incurred via Montreal." But, unhappily, a protectionist never recognises a boon to one interest, that is not a curse to some other. He has no conception of that great principle which unites all interests in one and the same wise and just course. Mr. Buchanan describes the new privilege given to the Canadian farmer, by securing a direct and cheaper transit for his flour, and justly describes it so, "as a great boon." But what are the next words? "This is a great blow to English shipping." Now, really, we must, in the name of the British shipowner, who has proved himself capable of withstanding all competition, protest against this inference which is constantly put forth by Mr. Buchanan's class, that he can only prosper by means which are alike disadvantageous to the great mass of consumers at home, and to the producers in the colonies.

But Mr. Buchanan's reiterated calls upon the Canadian colonies to revolt, are answered somewhat in the same spirit as the Duke of Richmond is answered by the farmers of England, when he calls for a panic. The accounts received from Canada this week, exhibit as little symptom of revolt as does the increasing competition to take farms at home, shew the existence of panic. The protectionists call equally in vain to the timber dealers in Canada, and to the wheat growers in England, for a sign. They are answered only by a more than usual contentment and satisfaction with the policy of the Government. This may be provoking; but it is one of the sad mortifications to which patriots like Mr. Buchanan must be ever exposed, that men will not lash themselves into a rage at the bidding of any one, when they are prosperous and successful.

Nor can it be a matter of surprise that this new ground chosen by Lord George Bentinck should prove as unprofitable as those from which he has already been obliged to retreat. If there is one branch of British commerce or colonial industry which has been more benefited than another by the free-trade policy of Sir Robert Peel, it has been the timber trade of Canada. In this case, it is not by any mere inference, gathered from the general statistics of the country, that we trace the benefits of our commercial and fiscal reforms. They are striking and palpable facts, easily recognized by every person directly or indirectly interested in the timber trade, from the back-woodsman to the merchant in London or Liverpool. The benefit to Canada has been a distinct and undeniable reality. In 1842, the duty upon Canada timber was reduced from ten shillings to one shilling the load. At the same time the duty upon foreign timber was reduced from fifty-five shillings to twenty-five shillings the load. As the law stood formerly, colonial timber had the apparent advantage of a differential duty in its favour of no less than forty-five shillings the load. As the law was then altered that advantage was reduced, under the new scale of duties, to twenty-four shillings the load. As usual, it was then foretold that Canada would be ruined—that the measure would be fatal to our timber trade. What has been the result? Our foreign timber trade has, no doubt, greatly increased, as must have been expected. But has the colonial trade been injured? On the contrary, the increase under the modified protective duty of 1842 has been even greater in the trade in colonial timber than in foreign timber. Let the facts speak for themselves. The following account shews the quantities of timber entered for consumption in each year since 1841, embracing, therefore, one entire year, under the old scale of duties, when no suspicion existed as to any change:—

COLONIAL TIMBER.

	Sawn		Hewn.	
	By Tale.	By Measurement.	Meas.	By Measurement.
	Gt. Head logs.	Loads.	Number.	Loads.
1841.....	59,594	2	7,546	619,557
1842.....	15,131	170,783	1,853	419,979
1843.....	—	217,366	—	605,924
1844.....	—	318,194	—	551,934
1845.....	—	428,591	—	797,490

FOREIGN TIMBER.

	Sawn.		Hewn.	
	By Tale.	By Measurement.	Meas.	By Measurement.
	Gt. Head logs.	Loads.	Number.	Loads.
1841.....	37,479	2,525	11,375	131,165
1842.....	27,079	57,784	5,032	108,788
1843.....	164	229,022	—	121,519
1844.....	979	321,430	—	282,208
1845.....	261	342,965	—	222,028

A glance at these returns will at once show how much more the import of colonial timber has increased, during the period in question, than even that of foreign timber. Nor has the change been less beneficial to our colonial shipping trade. The following is a statement shewing the amount of British tonnage engaged in the timber trade, in each year, since 1839,—distinguishing those employed in buying cargoes from the American colonies and foreign countries:—

	Tonnage from		Total.
	American Colonies.	From other countries.	
	Tons.	Tons.	
1839.....	657,375	164,774	822,151
1840.....	740,771	152,981	893,752
1841.....	854,430	109,806	964,236
1842.....	466,029	97,653	563,682
1843.....	690,418	129,658	819,076
1844.....	724,102	145,094	869,196
1845.....	965,867	149,000	1,114,867

We thus find, that notwithstanding the prognostications of ruined colonies and ruined shipping, the colonial timber trade actually gives employment to THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND tons of shipping more now, than before the differential duty was reduced; and so far from prices having been reduced to the Canadians by the freer introduction of foreign timber, it is one of the chief causes of complaint, on the part of these inconsistent advocates of restrictions, that the price of timber has actually risen in bond, while these great reductions of duties have taken place. What, then, do we find under this free system? A demand for timber from Canada fully thirty per cent larger than before; a higher price for the larger sales than the small ones, and three hundred thousand tons more of shipping employed now than in 1839, under the old highly restrictive and protective law. With the experience of such results before our Canadian subjects, the oratory of the Bentinck, D'Israeli, Borthwick school in Parliament, and the persevering epistles of Mr. Isaac Buchanan in the country, will in vain suggest to those provinces the certainty of future and early ruin. They have too recently recovered from what they have found was a groundless alarm in 1842, readily to fall again so soon into the same trap. On the contrary, our fellow-countrymen in Canada begin to stand erect in the consciousness of their own indefatigable industry, and their power to compete with the whole world. Conscious of advantages which their own skill and perseverance secure to them, they have learned to fear no rivalry. Lord George Bentinck may speak, and Mr. Isaac Buchanan may write: the Canadians have discovered that the advantages inherent in free and untrammelled trade, far more than compensate any apparent privileges which short-sighted restrictions conferred upon them, to the injury of their best and only customers.

FREE-TRADE OPINIONS IN FRANCE.

The subject of Free Trade seems to be progressing in France. The following article on this subject, from the *Journal des Débats*, will be read with feelings of interest by every free-trader:—

"The absolute isolation of nations, which is the object of prohibitionists, is a counterense in the present day. Is it peace or war which exists in Europe? Is it peace or war which ought to be encouraged? Is the most evident probability in favour of peace or war? What is a peace in which commerce, destined to bind nations together, is subjected to a thousand obstacles, a thousand delays, a thousand vexations? If it is the maintenance of peace that governments demand and ought to demand, they go right against their object in placing at each frontier excessive tariffs, like an unscalable wall. Foreigner remains synonymous with enemy, just as if the canon was still roaring, for a free-trade between two nations is publicly qualified as a tribute paid to a foreign power; in place of becoming in the official language what it really is, a profitable arrangement for both parties, what is done but to excite relative to commerce those ideas of hostility and implacable jealousy, of which the political effects are so justly dreaded? It has been declared a thousand times to the friends of prohibition, without their being able to give it an answer, that these absolute prohibitions, these exorbitant duties, place everything on a wrong footing, and in the end injure the very persons they were intended to protect. Let us take, for instance, the fabrication of linen threads and cloths by machinery. Great Britain, in whose manufactories work is done on so immense a scale, had produced a complete revolution in this article, and it was necessary to raise ourselves to a level with her. The principal impediment in this improvement consists in the dearth of the spinning machines. What, however, is done? At the moment that England permits the exportation of these machines, hitherto prohibited, in place of opening to them every entrance free of duty for a period of four or five years, which would infallibly produce the creation of numerous spinning factories, the duty on them, already elevated, has been augmented to an extreme amount. This, forsooth, is called protecting the national labour. It must be stated, that this most ill-judged measure is one of those which the orators of the league delight in referring to most frequently, to prove to their auditory to what inconsistencies the prohibitive system was sure to lead. Quite lately even ideas of free trade, presented with extreme moderation, and with due regard to the prejudices of nations, excited a sort of disdain. They were considered mere Utopian schemes, young men's dreams. Adam Smith was a madman, political economists lightheads; and in order to merit the title of a practical man, the first condition was to greet free trade, even in a mitigated point of view, with a smile. The practical man in commercial matters was he who had no fixed principle; who had neither read nor written anything on the subject, if not to cause a laugh against political economy. What do practical men think of the matter at present? Is Sir R. Peel a practical man? Is the avowal which he has made of his old prohibitive illusions an error, or the act of a great statesman, strong in his knowledge and his conviction? Is the striking homage which he has rendered to the memory of Adam Smith the enthusiasm of an unthinking scholar? We know well that our prohibitive gentleman will say, 'Oh, this is another Machiavelian trick of *la persée Albion*. England, which produces everything cheaper than other nations, has nothing to fear from the general reduction of duties: let us not be the dupes of this *ruse de guerre*.'