

Correspondence.

TRADE BETWEEN CANADA AND THE WEST INDIES.

To the Editor of the *Journal of Commerce*:

Sir,—Appreciating the deftness with which your correspondent, Sir Francis Hincks, handles his pen,—and imagining that any mere personal controversy would have little influence, at least so far as I am concerned, upon the gentlemen in the Cabinet and Parliament, who it is thought must, after all, settle the question of how to enlarge Canadian trade with the West Indies,—I write to you with diffidence, sincerely wishing that some one abler than myself, and with more time to spare, would undertake to follow Sir Francis through all the out-and-ins of his critique of November last, and his letter of 9th instant. To disabuse him of the belief that I had taken up the time of the Dominion Board of Trade merely by replying to him, (if the printed report does not satisfy him,) it may be mentioned that, had that been my purpose, his communication to your *Journal* afforded matter enough. The opinion is entertained by a very large number of manufacturers, merchants, and others, that the question of the hour in Canada is: how to arrest the downward tendency of her declining industries and decaying commerce; and if your energetic correspondent can accomplish anything in that direction, there can be no impropriety in humbly suggesting that his facile and talented pen would be worthily and patriotically employed in achieving it. It answered my purpose on the occasion referred to speak of the honorable gentleman incidentally with what was considered a happy omen,—viz., the Nova Scotia representatives at the Dominion Board most vigorously advocating a policy diametrically opposed to that which, so unfortunately for this country, was urged by a leading M. P. from that Province in 1868. It would have taken too much time to have done more; though I think it would have been purely an act of justice to have alluded further to what Sir Francis himself did, wittingly or unwittingly, to destroy a nascent industry. Our honorable friend, of course, remembers the amendatory Customs Act of 1870, in which he procured the enactment of a clause imposing a duty on packages. By that means he added a heavy blow to sugar refining in Canada, the result of that legislation being to impose a 25 per cent. *ad valorem* tax on the packages enclosing certain refining grades of sugar, which, I have been told, was practically equal to an addition of 10 cents to 12 cents per 100 lbs. on the raw material.

And now, what do we see? When the question of remedying the disastrous state of affairs comes up, the same gentleman steps nimbly to the front as special council on behalf of a foreign interest, to the disadvantage, as many believe, of home industry and development. If words have meaning, he pleads *con amore* the cause of a few West India planters who produce "crystallized centrifugal and superior grocery muscovado,"—the quantity of such produced from sugar cane constituting a very small proportion of what is exported by sugar-producing countries. Sir Francis' pet grades are, of course, used by refiners,—as well as "dark centrifugal for America" (thus regularly designated in a *Demerara Prices Current*), meaning artificially darkened kinds for the United States, where the classification for customs duty is by color. Why does not all the "crystallized centrifugal" go to Great Britain, where it will be admitted duty free? Because refiners there, as well as elsewhere, can and do successfully compete with it. Why, then, should there be a uniform duty on all kinds of sugar, for the benefit, among others, of producers of "crystallized centrifugal?" The agitators for a uniform rate, in 1868, no doubt imagined that such an arrangement would enable them to buy scale sugars in the West Indies, and sell them direct to the consumers in Ontario and Quebec,—forgetting, or refusing to believe, what is now more than ever a fact, that Canadians will purchase United States

cane sugar, or refinery sugars from Great Britain, rather than be satisfied with the raw or partially refined product of Demerara.

But there is another consideration,—quite an interesting one for shrewd and calculating finance ministers, which Sir Francis seems to have overlooked, and that is: the effect of an uniform duty upon the revenue of the country. About two years ago, Great Britain made a clean sweep from the tariff of all her sugar duties; but her previous experience may afford a valuable lesson to Canada, where revenue is so much a desideratum. A special committee of the House of Commons, of which Mr. (now Lord) Cardwell was chairman, reported *inter alia* as follows:—

"That the amount of revenue now derived from sugar could not with justice to the consumers of the lower classes of sugar be raised by any uniform duty applicable to all classes.

"That it is necessary to maintain the principle of a scale of duties with standards designed to include several classes of sugar within each range of duty.

"That the existing scale may be rendered more equitable by such an alteration as shall admit at lower relative rates of duty the inferior portion of the sugars which are now liable to pay 12s. 8d. and 16s. respectively."

It need not be remarked here, that the report of Mr. Cardwell's committee was founded upon the best of evidence; and the principle involved in its conclusions is as valid to-day as it was then wherever the question of revenue is an essential one. It is not, therefore, doing injustice to Sir Francis Hincks to say, that he contends for an apparent uniformity which in reality amounts to discrimination of an objectionable kind, and equivalent to a protection to the foreign manufacturer or quasi-refiner, which would result in a loss of revenue; while what I have ventured to advocate (letting refiners speak for themselves, if they care to,) is only an apparent discrimination which results in practical and equitable uniformity, leading to an increase of revenue.

It may well be feared that there is little hope of reasoning with Sir Francis, adhering as he usually so tenaciously does to whatever he formulates. In his first critique he said:—"There is really no obstacle to trade with the British West Indies at the present time." But the experience of the Trade seems to be pretty decidedly against his no-obstacle theory. And that there does seem to be a necessity for legislation of a very different kind from that strained after by him, is the opinion of a leading sugar-planter in Jamaica (Hon. George Solomon), for in a letter from him, recently published, I find the following remark:—

"Upon examination of your [the Canadian] Customs tariff it is observable that your duty upon the raw article of sugar is far beyond what it should be as compared with your duty upon the refined article; and until there be a more appreciable difference, either by the duty on the refined being increased, or the duty on the raw being reduced, it would prevent the exportation of the raw article to your country, as the only form practicable under the circumstances would be to send it to you in a refined state, and, as before brought to your attention, the difficulties in our way [lack of skilled labor or capital to refine] cannot be surmounted."

When the Governor of St. Iago de Cuba was in this city last year, he is reported to have expressed surprise that trade relations between the Spanish West Indies and Canada were so restricted; "but, after all," said he, "it appears to be impracticable for your people to deal with us to any very great extent, without refineries to enable them to use profitably our peculiar kinds of raw sugars."

It will also have been noticed that Mr. Jones, M.P. for Halifax, N.S., is reported to have said, a few days ago in the House of Commons, that the sugar question deserved consideration by Government; and that unless something were done to alleviate matters, there was danger of losing entirely a very valuable trade with the West Indies.

It is not a matter of surprise that Sir Francis

Lucan, March 10.—An outbuilding, owned by Pepper & Hogg, containing about \$3,000 worth of dressed flax and flaxseed, was totally consumed. Supposed incendiarism. No insurance.

Guelph, March 10.—A dwelling-house belonging to Henry Charman was destroyed by fire. Insured for \$1,000 in the Waterloo Mutual, which covers the loss.

Pricedville, March 12.—At about 11 this morning a frame building and contents, owned by Mr. Allan McDougall, was consumed by fire. The loss is about \$900; partly covered by insurance in the Stadacona.

London, March 12.—Fire broke out in Waterman's oil refinery. The burning oil overflowed into the street and coursed along a ditch for over 300 yards; then, meeting some obstacle, collected and spread to the refinery of Mr. A. M. Ross, burning his coopers and several minor buildings connected with the refinery, and also a frame building and barn near by. The fire lasted about two hours, and was the most destructive yet occurring in London East. Waterman's loss will be about \$8,000, but the firm is not disabled, and will be able to continue in operation. Loss about \$1,000. No insurance.

Quebec, March 13.—A fire was discovered breaking out of a shed belonging to the Corporation of the Town of Levis. The building and its contents were consumed. Loss, \$1,200.

Fenelon Falls, Ont., March 13.—A fire destroyed the hotel belonging to J. Twomey, and occupied by Noble Ingram; a blacksmith shop also owned by Twomey, a grocery store owned by R. B. Jamieson, and occupied by W. L. Robson, and a harness shop occupied by J. & T. Nevison.

Napawee, March 10.—This morning a fire slightly damaged the stores of C. R. Ashely and H. Boyle, in the McMillan Block. An investigation is to be held as to the cause of the fire.

ASSIGNMENTS IN PROVINCE OF QUEBEC DURING PAST WEEK.

Julius Ferslike, furrier, Joliette.
W. A. Gagnon, store, Three Rivers.
Wm. Gillice, hardware, Montreal.
Isidore Bowman, trader, Montreal.
Samuel James, roofer, Montreal.
Jas. B. Turner, insurance and commission, Quebec.

A. C. Marcotte, Quebec.
Louis Gerard, trader, Three Rivers.
Octave Brassard, Township of Durham.
Jas. Scott, jun., and Margaret J. Scott, chain and pump makers, Richmond.
Wm. Byrd, carpenter, Montreal.
Robert G. Lloyd, boots and shoes, Sherbrooke.
Day & Deblois, foundry, Montreal.

WRITS OF ATTACHMENT ISSUED VS.

H. J. Gear, wholesale teas and grocer, Montreal.
W. A. Gagnon, store, Three Rivers.
Samuel James, roofer, Montreal.
Walker & Labelle, blue manufacturers, Montreal.

F. X. Ledoux, carriages, Montreal.
M. H. Vallée, trader, Montmagny.
Napoleon Chasse, trader, St. Sauveur, Quebec.
John Hatchette & Co., wholesale grocers, Montreal.

Robert Balfour, produce, Montreal.

ASSIGNMENTS IN ONTARIO DURING PAST WEEK.

Timothy Bowes, general store, Ganaragus.
Thomas Conlan, painter, Toronto.
Geo. Matthews, Woodhouse.

Theo. Frederick, plumber, &c., Ottawa.

WRITS OF ATTACHMENT ISSUED VS.

W. F. Buchanan, wines, Ottawa.

C. P. Hill, grocer, Parkhill.

Stephen Phillips, general store, Hanover.

Mark Lewis, Windsor.

L. B. Freeman, ice, Hamilton.

Edward Kennedy, general store, Perth.

Martin S. Wegenast, doors, sashes, &c., Waterloo.

Adam Johnson, shoemaker, Oakville.