

We do not know how the Quebec Council of the Board of Trade can justify themselves to their constituents for this tardy acknowledgment of the letter from their Montreal *confrères*. It may be that they found an apathetic feeling in Quebec towards the undertaking; and the general terms in which the reply is couched would tend to favour this opinion. Be that, however, as it may, the Montreal Board of Trade, after waiting patiently for nearly a month for a reply, and not receiving one, appear to have given up all hopes of active assistance from Quebec. They then, a day or two previous to getting the reply from Quebec, addressed a communication to the Secretary of the Province, urging on the Government the establishment of a line of Telegraphs from Halifax, via Quebec and Montreal, to Toronto, stating their opinion that no insuperable difficulty exists as to the erection of such a line along the main post road through the British Provinces.

Now, we ask, what is there in the conduct of the Montreal Council of the Board of Trade calculated to give offence in the slightest degree to the most sensitive feelings of the inhabitants of Quebec; and still more, what is there in that conduct to justify the base and scurrilous attacks so unworthily made by the *Quebec Mercury*? The editor of that paper characterizes the application of the Montreal Board of Trade to the Governor General as "an act of infamy." As this can only be the individual opinion of the editor, we fancy our Board of Trade will estimate it at its true value, and treat the attack with silent contempt. As the Quebec Board of Trade—we speak from a long acquaintance with them individually, and from a thorough knowledge of their highly honourable characters—can be no party to the foul aspersions of the *Quebec Mercury*, we might allow them to pass without further notice, but there are still some points which to those who have taken the trouble to read his articles, may require some further elucidation.

The Montrealers are accused of want of courtesy, because they did not allow the Quebecers a proportion of the shares in the Toronto line, nor ask for their cooperation. We have shown the steps which the Montreal Board of Trade took, in autumn last, to obtain the cooperation of the Quebecers, and the cool manner in which their advances were received: and to this, as shewing the *animus* of the two Boards of Trade respectively, we may add that, on 23rd November last, when the subject of a Telegraphic communication to Portland was agitated here, the Montreal Board of Trade addressed the Quebec Board of Trade, to ascertain, in case the Telegraph should be carried from Portland to the Province line, whether the Quebecers would defray half the expense from the Province line to Melbourne, each city to carry the line at their own expense thence to their own doors. To this proposition, with apparently uncontrolled promptitude, say on the 3rd December, the Quebec Board of Trade gave an unqualified rejection; expressing their objection to the line as passing through a foreign country.

In citing the foregoing facts, our object is not to show the correctness of the views of the Montreal Board of Trade in opposition to those of the Quebec, but simply to demonstrate, which they do irrefragably, the disposition which the former have at various times evinced to cooperate with the latter, and the manner in which this disposition has been responded to.

But the editor of the *Quebec Mercury*, and some other wits of a similar order, lay great stress on a report which emanated a few weeks since from the Montreal Council of Trade, on the subject of the various telegraphic routes then under consideration. In this report the route since determined on by the people of Quebec, is spoken of as *impracticable*. Now granting the opinion of the Montreal Council of the Board of Trade to have been erroneous, it only shews the superior sagacity of the people of Quebec, and their superior knowledge of their own section of the country. But there is surely nothing here to gloat on with such extravagant delight, nor should the error of the Montrealers be treated as a grave offence to the good people of Quebec. But the fact even is not as has been supposed: that the Montreal people never apprehended any considerable difficulty in the construction of a telegraphic line, such as the Quebec people have now decided on, is obvious, from the letter to the Secretary of the Province, already adverted to, but the reasons for their impression of its impracticability, under existing circumstances, as given in that report are simply, that as a private undertaking it did not, in their opinion, show an adequate prospect of remuneration. Perhaps in coming to that conclusion, they were not a little influenced by the apparent apathy and *impracticability* of the Quebecers, who at that time evinced no symptom of that energy they now display.

We have made this explanation longer than we could have wished, but as, seeing in the Quebec press, such wholesale attacks on the Council of the Montreal Board of Trade, led us to examine the records of that body, we deemed it nothing less than an act of justice to communicate the results at which we arrived. We hope in the course of our remarks, nothing has fallen from our pen calculated to wound the feelings of the Quebec Board of Trade, to whom we wish to impute no fault, unless perhaps a want of energy and activity: even that imputation may be groundless. We hope, however, this little breach, if such there be, between our two Boards of Trade is merely temporary; and that it may lead, like lovers' quarrels, to renewed ardour and increased attachment.

## THE FREE NAVIGATION OF THE ST. LAWRENCE.

The question of the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence is not, in our opinion, agitated by the generality of the Press, or by public bodies such as the Boards of Trade of the Province, with that energy and pertinacity which we think its great importance, at the present crisis, demands. It is not sufficient, we humbly think, to call public attention to such points once a month or once a quarter; on the contrary, to do any good, they should be harped upon from day to day—looked at in every light—inspected from every point of view—and thrust continually under people's notice. Look at the metropolitan press of the mother country, for an example; observe how they handle a question of public importance. Do they merely give a leader or two, and then let the matter drop for months, or until a bill is introduced in Parliament again to awaken their slumbering energies? Nothing of the kind. On the contrary, from the time of taking up a great question, till it is finally decided by competent authority, they never cease to agitate it; their columns are daily loaded with it; it is dinned into the ears of the public in every form that invention can devise, and thus, in time, by dint of constant agitation, the reform is secured. Take a file of the *London Times*, for instance, while the Corn Law question was before the country, and we venture to assert that for months and months together, no number of that journal will be found without some reference to the great question of the day. Take up a file of the same paper now, and we again venture to assert the same fact with reference to the present great question of the day, viz.: What is to be done for Ireland—how is she to be governed for the future? That question of questions is now referred to daily in the columns of that mighty journal, and no doubt will continue to be so till it is set at rest, if it ever be so, by the action of Parliament. And such is the spirit which we wish to see developed by our colonial press in the management of local questions of vital importance, such as the following, viz.:—Free Trade, including the Free Navigation Laws—general education—internal improvements—and post-office reform. These, we affirm, are the great questions of the day in this colony, and if our press were of a higher standard, and capable of imitating the leading journal of the world and its metropolitan contemporaries, it would agitate them from day to day till the public mind were ripened, and the way thus paved for ultimate legislative action upon them.

But on the other hand, what do we behold? Our press frittering away its time, and consuming that of the public, with empty tirades about Responsible Government, and petty squabbles about appointments to office. In making these remarks, we do not mean to undervalue the question of Responsible Government, nor the rule which should regulate appointments to office, for on the contrary, we hold both to be of the very highest consequence to the well-being of the colony, and we trust that the legislature, maintaining its rights with jealousy, will see that the principles of Responsible Government are thoroughly and effectually engrafted in our constitution. Let there be no half measures. But this question is already well understood; the two great parties in the colony have pronounced their judgment upon it; the difference between them is, in our opinion, but the splitting of a hair; and, therefore, we say let the question for the present be laid upon the shelf as already decided, and let one and all devote their energies to the discussion of the great practical questions, we have already referred to, as those of paramount importance to the colony at the present day. In this sweeping denunciation of our press, however, we ought to make some special exceptions, and we do so in favor of the *Pilot*, the *Miner*, the *Herald*, and several other journals of both sections of the province, and on both sides of politics.

But papers of the opposite character are unfortunately by far the most numerous, and the *Gazette*, the organ as it is called, of the present Administration, may be taken as a type of the whole of this class. Who for months past, let us enquire, has seen a useful article in the organ's columns?

The *Herald* has spoken out plainly and boldly on the question of Post Office reform, and has from time to time reviewed most of the other leading topics. But has the *Gazette* given these subjects a thought? Let it not be supposed we select the *Gazette* from pique in thus parading its public omissions. On the contrary, our motive for doing so is that it is looked upon as the organ of the ministry; and seeing the organ thus mute and inactive—thus forgetful of the best interests of the province—thus apparently incompetent to give opinions upon the momentous local questions of the day, have we not a right, we ask, to infer that its columns are a reflection of the inactivity and emptiness of the local cabinet of the day. We humbly conceive that we are justified in entertaining and avowing these opinions—otherwise the *Gazette* must be a very imperfect organ—for surely an active cabinet could not have so dumb an