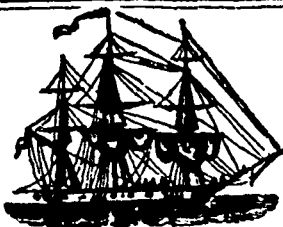


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



FREE TRADE JOURNAL, AND WEEKLY COMMERCIAL NEWS.

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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 4TH JULY, 1846.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 4TH JULY, 1846.

GOVERNOR'S DESPATCH.

In our last number we inserted a copy of a Despatch, dated 28th January last, from His Excellency the Governor-General to the Colonial Secretary, on the subject of the changes in the Corn Laws which it was then rumoured the British Ministry contemplated to submit to the Imperial Parliament. This despatch, which has been inserted in most of the public journals of this province, would have been briefly animadverted on in our last issue, had our space permitted; but we do not regret the delay, since further reflection has strengthened and confirmed the impressions which its first perusal excited in our minds, and we are now enabled to examine it fully.

It is, we presume, unnecessary to remind our readers, that this document must be considered, in a constitutional point of view, as the production, not of his Excellency, but of his responsible advisers; and consequently that the freedom we shall use in examining it, dictated as it will be, by a sense of duty to the cause which we advocate, will not be construed by any as disrespectful to the Representative of our Sovereign. We also request our readers to give credit to our assertion, that in commenting with some severity on the Ministers' despatch, we attack them, not as a ministry, but as the opponents of Free-Trade. For political parties in this province we care not a rush, except in so far as they may respectively conduce to obtain for us the objects of our confederacy, namely, the removal, so far as is consistent with a due regard to the public revenue, of all restrictions on our commercial intercourse with all nations.

Having made these preliminary observations, we proceed to the examination of the despatch in question, which we unhesitatingly assert contains greater solecisms as regards constitutional practice, and more errors as regards facts and principles, than any document of equal length which it has ever been our fortune to peruse. These assertions we trust to prove to the satisfaction of our readers before we conclude.

In the first place, we strongly object to the threat, for we can call it nothing else, that the adoption of Free-Trade in grain in England will cause here "alienation from the mother country, and annexation to our rival and enemy, the United States." Passing over the indecency on the part of our Government, in designating as "an enemy," a conterminous country, with whom we are in the enjoyment of a peaceful and friendly commercial intercourse, and between whom and our parent state there exists the most cordial feeling, cemented by treaties which the enlightened statesmen of both nations, however they may differ on minor topics, sincerely desire to render still more binding and irrefragable:—passing over, we say, this most injudicious expression of our Government, because we trust it has not escaped the notice of the Colonial Minister, we demand the authority on which so foul a stigma is attempted to be cast on the people of this colony, as that they are desirous, in consequence of the adoption of Free-Trade measures in England, to withdraw from their allegiance, and annex themselves to the United States.

It is true that a precedent has been found in the language of others who presumed to arrogate to themselves the representation of public opinion in Canada. First, the ex-Agent of the colony,

Mr. BLISS, then the ex-"Member of the Provincial Parliament," and ex-"President of the Board of Trade at Hamilton," Mr. ISAAC BUCHANAN, and subsequently the members of the Colonial Association (we think they stile themselves so) of London, have thought fit to indulge in lugubrious predictions of the consequences of Sir R. PEEL's measures, have written letters headed "LOSS OF THE COLONIES OF ENGLAND," nay have conjured up the phantom of disaffection, to affright the Minister from his propriety. But all in vain: their lamentations find no response within the colony: the word *annexation* is not so much as whispered: the people continue obstinately loyal, and instead of thinking of cutting the connection with the parent state, they seek to cement it only more firmly by adapting our policy to our altered position. Such being notoriously the fact, in what terms are we to characterize the conduct of the constituted authorities of the country, in casting the aspersion on the character of its inhabitants of graduating their loyalty according to the fluctuations of the sliding-scale—giving it when protection is 20s. per quarter double the fervency of when it is only 10s.—and reducing it to nothing when protection is at zero!

But the advisers of this despatch, not content with making us throw off our allegiance to the mother country, seem desirous that we should cast off at the same time all other moral obligations. They hint, as a "possible case," national bankruptcy—in other words, the violation of the solemn compact entered into with the public creditors—of throwing upon our guarantee the burthen of paying the debt we have incurred—and all the other villainies comprehended under the term *REPUTATION*!

Now, on what grounds is so detestable a proposition predicated, or how is it, we will not say justified, but palliated? The despatch says:

"The improvement of the internal communications by water in Canada was undertaken on the strength of the advantage of exporting to England our surplus wheat and flour to Quebec. Should no such advantage exist, the revenue of the province to be derived from the tolls would fail. The means of the province to pay principal and interest on the debt guaranteed by England, would be diminished, and the general prosperity of the province would be so materially affected as to reduce its revenue derived from commerce, thus rendering it a possible case that the guarantee given to the public creditors would have to be resorted to by them for the satisfaction of their claims."

Any person reading the above passage, and the other parts of of the despatch, would infer that the vast expenditure on our internal communications by water had been incurred under the guarantee of Great Britain that we were to enjoy some specific degree of protection in her market for our surplus wheat and flour, and that, without that promise of protection, these works would not have been undertaken. Now, if our readers will take the trouble to peruse the Journals of the House of Assembly for the session of 1841, they will be satisfied that there was no promise or pledge, either expressed or implied, on the part of the British Government; but that the guarantee of the debt to be incurred was given simply as a boon, and principally with a view to the rendering efficient of works begun long before, but sinking into decay, and otherwise useless from their not being completed to the shipping ports; and that, throughout the whole of the proceedings of the House of Assembly on the subject of public improvements, not the slightest reference is made to the *corn* trade of the country. So little did our legislators at that time think of what the Despatch styles "our surplus wheat and flour," that, in the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly on the wheat and flour trade, in 1842, it is observed,—"All the grain grown in Canada will not supply the consumption of British North America." Indeed, from the year 1832 to the year 1839, Canada had not exported to Great Britain any quantity of either wheat or flour worthy of mention.

It must, therefore, be obvious to every person, that the assertion in the Despatch, that "the improvements of the internal communications by water in Canada, were undertaken on the strength of the advantage of exporting to England our surplus wheat and flour by Quebec," is, like many other parts of that document, utterly erroneous. And we shall only add to this exposition, that the Corn Law, the repeal of which is thus protested against, was not passed until 1843; and the public debt, the *repudiation* of which is almost justified on account of that repeal, was incurred in 1841!