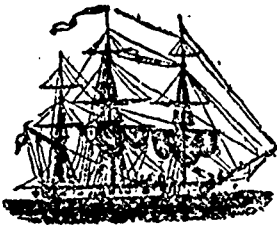


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 17TH APRIL, 1847.

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QUEBEC BOARD OF TRADE AND 'QUEBEC GAZETTE.'

Our last number contained the Report read at the Annual General Meeting of the Board of Trade of Quebec; that of our Board being inserted in the same paper, will inform the public generally of the points in which these bodies respectively agree or differ.

We continue to pursue the course we have hitherto, since the institution of this journal, adopted, of commenting on the Reports of the various Boards of Trade, because we deem them to be documents of high importance, and worthy of most attentive examination by every person interested in the commerce of the country. With the Quebec Board of Trade we have had the misfortune to differ in opinion to a considerable extent, and the Report now before us is no exception to this too general rule. It reiterates all the fallacies again and again refuted, and repeats all the threats and worn out expressions of alarm at the policy of the Mother Country.

Faulty, however, as this Report is, we rejoice to observe that there are some faint gleams of sunshine to illuminate the dark and dreary void. First, the attempt to induce the British Government to recede from the policy which they have adopted, appears to have been abandoned as a fruitless task, and we may therefore venture to hope that they will by and bye feel the necessity of acting with us in the adaptation of our commercial system to that which obtains in Britain. So long as they confined themselves to vain lamentations at, instead of active opposition to, the progress of Free Trade, it would really seem cruel to disturb their enjoyment of the "luxury of grief"; and we shall therefore leave without an answer their complaint that 11s. sterling per load, or nearly cent per cent. on the cost of White Pine Timber, at the port of shipment, is an inadequate protection in the British market to the colonist over the foreigner. Really our Quebec friends must rely strongly on the prejudice or ignorance of their auditors, or they would never have ventured to repeat their complaint of the insufficiency of this protection, after the conclusive answer given to them by Mr. GLADSTONE, the late Colonial Secretary. However, we would say in the Eastern style, "May their shadow (of protection) never be less!" we count all which the British Government may choose to give so much clear gain to the colony, and, if the British people are content, there can be no objection here to that protection being extended to such a degree as even to satiate the desires of the good merchants of Quebec.

Our second cause of rejoicing at the progression of the Quebec Board of Trade is their apparent conversion on the subject of the Differential Duties. Last year, at their "Great Protection Meeting," as they called it, they congratulated themselves on the power which they conceived to be conceded to the Provincial Parliament of imposing, whilst this year they are grateful for the power given to that body of repealing, the Differential Duties. This is a decided advance towards sound Free Trade principles.

A third ray of light has beamed on our Quebec friends on a subject in which it is well known we take a lively interest. Last November they thought fit to "abstain from giving an opinion as

to the removal of all the restrictions that now operate against the free navigation of the St. Lawrence, believing that that question is better understood by the Imperial Government, as involving principles and interests of great magnitude and vast importance to the whole empire." Now they remark, "A matter concerning us as closely is the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence, and on this your Council are at no loss to express their opinion."

Whence this sudden enlightenment? How has the Quebec Board of Trade arrived at this "better understanding" of "principles and interests of great magnitude and vast importance," which but a few short months since, according to their *dictum*, was monopolized by the "Imperial Government"? We own ourselves a good deal puzzled to reconcile the boldness with which they now decide a question which they so oracularly, a short time since, pronounced to be beyond the capacity of any intellect short of that of the "Imperial Government." However, if they have advanced on the question of the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence to make amends, they have, precisely to a similar extent, retrograded on the question of the British Navigation Laws. In November last they boldly took up the cudgels in defence of these laws, as a colonial question, but now they assent "this subject rests entirely with the Imperial Legislature," and they therefore "deem it unnecessary to go into any lengthy details." Verily it would require an Oedipus to solve the enigmas of the Quebec Sphinx! For our part, we candidly confess we do not know what the Board of Trade mean. To-day, in their opinion, the British Navigation Laws are a fit subject for discussion, and the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence must be left to the Imperial Government; to-morrow the case is reversed: we are prohibited from examining into the effects of the British Navigation Laws, but we are competent to give judgment, *ex cathedra*, on the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence! In which of these opinions are the good people of Quebec to repose their faith? They are both, be it observed, the deliberate expression of the same Board, composed of the same members, and no reason is vouchsafed for the discrepancy! Which is the true confession of faith? O, are both—although diametrically opposed—to be believed as emanating from an infallible authority? We leave this question for the solution of the Quebec Board of Trade, and shall really feel obliged if they will remove our doubts.

On one point, however, we must admit, that our Quebec friends are perfectly consistent at all times; and that is, in demanding absolute and full protection to every interest with which they are in the slightest degree connected, and entire removal of the protection afforded to every other interest in the province. Thus, "Duties levied on agricultural produce," for protection, they consider "highly objectionable in principle, and injurious to the commercial prosperity of the colony"; "Taxes on Raw Materials required for manufacturing purposes" should at once be removed; Usury Laws "ought to be repealed on all commercial transactions," "but not in reference to bonds, mortgages, or other incumbrances on real estate"; "all restrictions" should be removed "from American shipping navigating our noble river," at the same time that in the external or foreign trade, "they are decidedly of opinion that encouragement and protection should be afforded the British and Colonial Shipping over Foreign." Can any thing be imagined more inevitably absurd than this blowing hot and cold with the same breath,—this admixture of the sound principles of Free Trade with the exploded fallacies of Protection? And is not a document which comprehends such a farago, unworthy of the highly respectable body from which it emanates?

Our contemporary the *Patriot* has commented, in terms in which we entirely concur, on that passage in the Report which refers to the "stipulation insisted on by the Commissioner of Crown Lands in the licences granted last season to cut timber on the lands of the Crown, obliging each holder to manufacture 1,000 feet annually for each mile of his limits."

Can any thing be more reasonable and just than such a stipulation? We are not disposed at present to go into the propriety of the course adopted by the Government in the issuing of these licences. We have heard some extraordinary stories on that subject; but it is manifestly their duty not to allow whole tracts