

## Mr. RICARDO AND THE NAVIGATION LAWS.

In another part of this day's impression we give an article from the *London Economist* on the question of the Navigation Laws, suggested by a motion made by Mr. Ricardo in the House of Commons, for a select committee to enquire into their operation and effects.

The article is well worthy of perusal, and we accordingly invite our readers' attention to it.

We rejoice that a British statesman has already had the manliness to come forward and demand a thorough examination of these laws, and we trust that our local parliament (if it ever meet again, which it is difficult to determine at the present moment,) will see, that Canadian interests and views are thoroughly explained and enforced before that committee.

A parliamentary committee has, in fact, long been a favorite idea of our own, for the most wholesome legislation has generally been built upon the results of such formal inquiries. Indeed on the 23rd January last, we threw out a hint in this journal to the effect that such a committee should be appointed in our local legislature to collect and circulate authentic information upon the subject. We said, "Let the latter [the local legislature] be compelled to take the matter up and, if necessary, let it appoint a committee to enquire, before making the demand, whether Canada has reason to ask for their modification [i. e. of the British Navigation Laws,] under her existing relations with the mother country or not. We should like to see a committee of this kind appointed, being satisfied that, if properly selected, the evidence which would be collected by it, would satisfy the most sceptical both here and in the mother country, that the claims which we advance respecting these laws are well founded, and that in fact the prosperity of our agriculture and commerce mainly depends upon their immediate abrogation."

Again, on the 30th January, we indicated the policy which this colony should pursue in the following words: "The colonists, however, are the sufferers; and if their voice is heard or heeded in the British House of Commons, these [the navigation] laws must speedily be reconsidered, and their restrictions waived or modified—or it requires no prophet to foretell that indignation and disgust will settle in the colonial mind from a conviction that our general welfare is disregarded by the mother country, except where it clearly and conclusively coincides with that of her own favored classes."

Now, the truth of the foregoing remarks is already, we think, made obvious. A crisis has arisen in the affairs of the mother country requiring a modification of the Navigation Laws, and without hesitation they are suspended to meet the emergency.

But had Canadian interests any weight in bringing about this determination?—were they, in fact, alluded to directly or indirectly,—or did ministers think for a single instant of the interests of Canada when they proposed a suspension of these laws till the 1st September next? To all these questions we answer decidedly and emphatically—no! Canadian interests consulted! Absurd—they never have been in any instance, till Canadians themselves forced their wants and their rights upon the notice of the British Parliament. In proof of this it is not necessary that we should take up the history of Canada from the period of the conquest downwards; it is sufficient that we refer to the conduct of parliament during its last session. When Sir Robert Peel brought in his new Corn Law, commonly called his Free Trade measure, did he simultaneously bring in a bill,—as he ought to have done as an act of simple justice to the colonists,—to allow them to do away with the Imperial Differential Duties if they saw fit to do so? Nothing of the kind. The British Parliament passed a law of Free Trade for themselves, but they left the colonies still hampered by imperial restrictions. And it is probable that were it not for the efforts of the Free Trade Association and the Boards of Trade of Montreal and Toronto, no bill would to this day have been passed to enable us to relieve ourselves from these restrictions.

Nor are we singular in using such strong language towards the mother country. Our fellow colonists of the West Indies complain in still harsher and more emphatic terms of her indifference to colonial interests, in a document which has emanated from a body which appears by a variety of evidence to exercise a considerable influence over public opinion in the mother country—we mean the standing committee of West Indian planters and merchants, the report of the acting committee of which we have now before us. In this document, which we shall perhaps give at length in a future number, we find the policy of the mother country reviewed. The differential duties, the navigation laws, and other restrictions are alluded to; and in a burst of indignant remonstrance, after showing how alterations have been made from time to time without consulting the colonies, the report adds:

—"The mother country retained these restrictions upon us as long as it was advantageous to herself to do so without any regard to our interests."

Such language from such a source is pregnant with meaning. It shows that the colonial mind is now thinking for itself—has discovered that the colonial policy of the mother country has hitherto been based on selfishness, having regard to imperial interests alone,—that in fact, in the words of the West India report, every change is and has ever been made "without any regard to our interests." Under these circumstances, it is gratifying to us to see our fellow colonists in the West Indies, like ourselves, pursuing the manly course of declaring their grievances, and demanding from the mother country a full measure of relief.

The English press, too, we are happy to perceive is taking up the colonial cause. The metropolitan journals, almost without exception, advocate the removal of the restrictions which our journal was established for the purpose of denouncing, and which we have lost no opportunity of exposing in all their deformity to the view of this community. But we have a *vis inertiae* to struggle against, which it is hard to overcome—that of a prejudiced and spiritless people. Is there another community on the face of the earth which would have allowed the minister of the day to trifle with its best interests as Mr. Draper has trifled with ours? Would the United States have tolerated such a state of things without a murmur—without raising a voice of remonstrance against such suicidal delay? Would England have tolerated it? Is there a nation, we repeat, on the face of the earth with the slightest approach to representative institutions which would have suffered such intolerable apathy at the hands of its responsible servants? We answer emphatically, no!

But to return to the reference we have made to the metropolitan journals. We find the following paragraph in the *Colonial Gazette* of the 2nd instant; which will show the spirit which pervades the generality of these journals on the subject of the laws referred to. "There is a question," says the *Colonial Gazette*, "which will not be keenly pressed this session, but over which 'the straw is being moved'—we mean the Navigation Laws. In so far as the importation of articles for food is concerned their operation is suspended to the 1st September next. This, however, their admirers may flatter themselves, gives them a shake; and the innovations of Wallace and Huskisson have already given them a pretty rough one. Mr. Ricardo is to move for a select committee on them, and, if it be granted, they will receive a still ruder shake. A strong party in Canada have already raised their voices against these laws, and if the West India Colonies join in the remonstrance, an extensive modification of them, if not the entire abrogation, may be counted on in the course of next session."

With such encouragement we conceive this colony has only to advance. Let our legislature meet, and acting on the suggestions we have repeatedly thrown out, let it address the imperial authorities for a total suspension of the Navigation Laws as respects ourselves; and backed by such support, we conceive the Free Trade party in the British Parliament would have no difficulty, as we trust they would have no hesitation, in carrying a bill through parliament for that purpose. But what is done, must be done quickly, or the present excellent opportunity may be lost for ever.

## THE 'MONTREAL HERALD.'

We read with pleasure an article in the pages of the *Montreal Herald* of the 27th ult., on the subjects of free navigation of the St. Lawrence—the abolition of the laws imposing the differential duties—and the repeal or modification of the navigation laws. We need scarcely say that we agree generally both in the conclusions at which the editor aims, and in the reasoning by which he supports them. It has always afforded us great satisfaction to acknowledge the able assistance which we have received from our contemporaries,—especially the *Pilot* and *Herald*,—the former of which has at all times, and the latter has occasionally, rendered good service in the cause of Free Trade.

We own, however, that until we read the article in the *Herald* above alluded to, we were not duly impressed with his transcendent merits. We had fondly pictured to ourselves that if credit were due to any paper for the manifest change which has been wrought in the public opinion respecting Free Trade, some portion at least would fall to our share. But no! to the *Herald* it appears belongs the merit, and *Palmam qui meruit ferat*: he was "the first to point out the certain consequences of this new system upon Canadian staples, and to describe with clearness those remedies, from which alone we could hope anything in the coming dangers;" and "while the boldness of his propositions startled some, and alarmed others, he adhered to his opinions which he had expressed after an earnest consideration of the subject, and events have proved the correctness of the conclusion to which that consideration brought him."—"The Free Trade League, with a Free