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**The Journal of Commerce**

FINANCE AND INSURANCE REVIEW.

MONTREAL, MARCH 16, 1877.

**THE TARIFF DEBATE.**

The debate on Sir John A. Macdonald's amendment to the resolutions of the Government embodying their fiscal policy has brought forward several gentlemen who have not hitherto taken a prominent part in the discussions in the House. Mr. Dalton McCarthy, the new member for Cardwell, and Mr. Charlton, member for North Norfolk, spoke on opposite sides, and, if we may judge by the array of figures quoted by both gentlemen, they had made considerable preparation. On subjects such as that under consideration figures are indispensably necessary, but great care must be taken to subject them to the closest scrutiny, as they are often misleading, and not unfrequently used to establish the foregone conclusions of the speaker. Mr. Charlton, who is a strong free trader, asks the question: "Had we anything to complain of at the present as to the state and development of our manufactures? In 1875 the exportation of domestic manufactures was \$2,203,000, and in 1876 it had increased to \$3,164,000; surely an increase of 38 per cent. in one year was a satisfactory exhibit

"for any industry to make, and he ventured to say that in no other country, whether free trade or protectionist, could be shown a better exhibit." Now we are ready to admit that the figures cited by Mr. Charlton are correct, and that the deduction from those figures appears to be plausible and calculated to support that gentleman's free trade argument, but we must, at the same time, deny that they convey an accurate description of the real facts. It was, no doubt, convenient to compare the year 1876 with 1875, a year of greatly reduced exports, instead of with 1873, but Mr. Charlton, when he undertook to deal with the exports of manufactures, in order to establish their development, ought to have gone a little more into detail, and to have shown in what branches of our infant manufactures there was such great prosperity. Not having been satisfied with the general statement of Mr. Charlton we have endeavored to ascertain for ourselves what particular trades are in such a flourishing condition as that which he has indicated. The export of extract of hemlock bark was \$230,229 in 1875 and \$379,258 in 1876. In 1873 it was only \$106,000. Now it is at least open to grave doubt whether the increased export of this article is advantageous to our interests. A few years ago there were urgent representations to the Government to endeavor to restrain its exportation by a prohibitory duty. It may well be doubted whether this increase of about \$150,000 is a subject for congratulation. Then there is an increase in the export of iron and hardware of nearly \$100,000. In the years previous to 1876 no distinction is made between "pig and scrap iron" and "iron and hardware," so that no fair comparison can be made, but of the \$292,211 exported in 1876 no less than \$196,928 was "pig and scrap," and we must own that we should have thought it a much greater subject of congratulation to the House and the country if Mr. Charlton had been able to shew that our pig and scrap iron had been used at home in our domestic manufactures. Wood manufactures are better classified in 1876 than in former years, and we are, therefore, unable to institute a comparison on any article but that which is probably the most important, viz., "sugar boxes." In wood goods generally there is no material difference between 1875, and 1876, but in both years there is a lamentable falling off from 1872 and 1873. Adverting, however, to Mr. Charlton's years, sugar boxes were \$288,630 in 1875 and \$205,166 in 1876. In 1873 they were \$712,101. It will be borne in mind that Mr. Charlton's aggregate increase of exports was \$871,340. We have

accounted for \$244,060 under the heads of hemlock bark and iron. The great item of increase is in leather and its manufactures. These were \$1,105,981 in 1876 and \$527,348 in 1875, or an increase of \$578,633. In this article there has been a great improvement in the classification, as until 1876 it was all classed as "leather." Of the large quantity exported in 1876 no less than \$956,379 was "sole and upper leather," and, we confess, as in the case of pig and scrap iron, we doubt whether the country is to be congratulated on sending off the raw material of a very important manufacture. The total amount of boots and shoes exported in 1876 was \$83,279, but we have no means of instituting a comparison between the exports of this article in 1876 and those of former years. There was also an increase in grindstones in 1876 over 1875 to the extent of \$23,196, that utensil being an entirely new article of export, not having been noted at all until 1875, when it was \$2,559. We now come to "sewing machines"—the value of which in 1875 was \$254,510, and in 1876, \$305,749, an increase of \$51,239. As a slight drawback to this increase we may notice that the average values in 1875 were about \$2 each machine higher than in 1876, while in 1873 both the number and average value was considerably higher than in 1876. We have more than accounted already for the aggregate increase of exports in 1876 over 1875. We cannot undertake to go through the whole list, but in some items there was falling off, as in books, which were \$45,634 in 1875 and \$20,579 in 1876; gypsum or plaster, \$40,809 in 1875 and \$32,063 in 1876. On the other hand, woollens were \$17,954 in 1875 and \$45,249 in 1876. It must, however, be noted that in 1873 the export of gypsum was \$121,220 and of woollens, \$52,780. We shall not weary our readers with any more details, but we trust that we have established our point, which was that, by wholly omitting details, Mr. Charlton gave a completely false coloring to his picture of "the state and development of our manufactures," and that the result is anything but "a satisfactory exhibit." We concur in much that Mr. Charlton stated as to the cause of the depression. We have never joined with those who have held the Government as responsible for that depression. There can be no doubt that in addition to the causes which we have more than once indicated, viz., the introduction of a large amount of foreign capital, which necessarily stimulated trade, the inflation in the adjoining States led to an abnormal demand for our lumber. It may be worth noting the exports of "planks, boards and joists,"