

Tight Binding

POO

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The Journal.

Thursday, November 24, 1859. DISCUSSION AND INQUIRY—MR. WILMOT'S LETTER.

As we have determined not to shut our columns against communications of the nature of the one concerning which Mr. Wilmot has written us, we have acceded to his request for the publication of his letter. We may explain that this letter was preceded by another, which we, not knowing whether it was meant for insertion, replied to privately. Mr. Wilmot replies to us in the letter which appears elsewhere. We had not expected that the discussion to which Mr. Raymond's first letter gave rise would extend to so great a length, or take so wide a range; but firmly convinced that our cause is the cause of truth, we shrink neither from the publication of the arguments of our opponents nor from the discharge of our duty in meeting them at every turn.

Mr. Wilmot's objection to the printing of such letters as that of Mr. Peabody is simple and easily understood. He fears that their perusal by the young and inexperienced may exert a baneful influence upon their minds. The conclusion which we draw from his remarks is that he would have the young read nothing on religious subjects that did not coincide with the opinions of their friends and guardians; that he would shut out from them all sides of religious questions except one, for fear they might be led astray,—or, in other words, led to disbelieve any thing which their guardians believe, or believe any thing which their guardians disbelieve.

This is the favorite policy of the great majority of mankind; and yet it will not bear a moment's investigation. It has always appeared to us that men who argue thus can have no real faith in the creed which they profess. Has Christianity no strength and no vigor of its own, that it cannot sustain and repulse the attacks of its foes without being surrounded by this triple wall of ignorance, prejudice and superstition? These men boast of the beauty and glory and potency of their system; and yet they treat it as though it were the flimsiest and puniest and frailest of dogmas, in constant danger of being blown away by the breath of the slightest opposition. They wrap their nursing in thick clothes; they shut out from its face the vivifying rays of free discussion; they feed it not with the solid and wholesome food which is the favorite nourishment of other nursings,—on which Science and Philosophy have fed and prospered,—but they pamper it with a peculiar diet, which would infallibly starve to death any other nascent system. They don't set the roots of their plant in the bosom of old Mother Earth, and leave it to flourish in the bright sunshine, the whole some winds and the soft dews of heaven; but they train it in a hotbed, cover it with a glass roof, and carefully shut out from it the rough but kindly hand of nature. So it grows up a weak and sickly plant, with a constitution that is artificial, and of the frailest.

When it is transplanted out,—as every such plant must needs be,—and is no longer surrounded by the artificial atmosphere and the false conditions in which it was raised, it speedily droops and dies under the scorching beams of the sun, or the rough winds which play about it; for it has no hardiness, no vigor, no real vitality.

It is not thus that God trains up men to do his work. He never presents to them but one side of a matter, and hides from them all others. He fears not free discussion, but stimulates and encourages it. He plants in the child the desire to know all things, to plunge into the mysteries of creation and of existence, to read every page of the great book of Nature without a thought as to what it may contain, or to what result its lessons may seem to lead. To the young alike with the old he gives no enjoyment now disappointment, now faith now doubt, now happiness now misery. He spares not affliction to the young, even though it may throw them into despair, and into doubt of the existence of a benevolent and merciful deity. The little one who plunges his hand into the fire suffers the penalty just as does the adult who sees in the pain the kind and necessary warning of nature. Famine and Pestilence, War and Social convulsion, the Earthquake and the Tornado, are not withheld lest they may raise doubts of the beneficence of the deity; the book of nature is opened for man to read, and the more deeply and widely he reads the more firmly founded becomes his faith in the wisdom and goodness of the Father of Lights. The Faith that is born of ignorance must be weak and puny; the Faith that is the progeny of extensive and profound knowledge, of searching investigation, of unclouded reason, must be strong and firm as the adamant rock.

But Mr. Wilmot thinks that the young should only see one side of the question until their "judgments" have become "mature." Will he explain to us how it is possible for the judgment to be matured without that very study of both sides of the question which he forbids? We know of no patent process for maturing the judgment; it must be done in the one old way pointed out by Nature from the beginning of things,—by the study of the question from all sides and in all lights, by careful investigation of all that can be said for or against, by a thorough and conscientious training in the weighing of all sorts and descriptions of arguments and considerations. Neither is it possible to mature the judgment for religious questions by the study of questions other than religious. Newton might have gone on for a hundred years solving the highest problems in natural science without having become as good a navigator as the merest cabin boy of a coaster. Stephenson might have studied locomotive machinery till his eyes dropped from his head without being able to decide upon the feasibility of the Victoria Bridge. To understand any subject that subject itself must be studied; general information will never make a man competent to decide a question in a special science or art. The rule applies to religious creeds and doctrines as much as to any thing else. How can a man who knows no system but Calvinism,—who has never read about or studied any other,—decide upon the comparative merits of Calvinism and Arminianism? How can the Protestant who resolutely shuts his eyes against every thing that is written, and his ears against every

thing that is said, in favor of Romanism, pretend to decide which is the most in accordance with Scripture? It is certainly the strangest mode of "maturing" a "judgment" to present to it everything on one side of a question upon which it is expected to pronounce, and to hide from it everything that makes for the other side. What would be said of a rabbit fancier who should breed his rabbits till they became all ears and no feet, and gravely call it "maturing" the species!

We are aware that Mr. Wilmot does not mean to say that by his process the judgments of the young are matured in matters of religion, but merely that the judgment is matured generally. But the result is that which we have indicated. While Mr. Wilmot is waiting for the judgment to mature before placing before the young publications which oppose his own system, he is carefully indoctrinating them with that system, so that when they come to the age of discretion his creed is so fortified by education and prejudice that it is almost impossible to storm even its least defensible quarters. Consequently the young man's own reason and judgment are not responsible for his opinions; Religion becomes a matter of training and habit; and we are almost forced to agree with the remark of Lord Brougham, that a man is no more responsible for the nature of his religious creed than he is for the cut of his coat.

Would Mr. Wilmot, whom we know to be a consistent Conservative, deprive young people of the reading of Liberal newspapers?

But, he may reply, this is a matter of vastly more importance than politics. The dangers which spring from improper religious, or infidel, opinions are incomparably greater than can attach to mere political heterodoxy. And then, the great majority of all parties, classes and sects hold to the Christian Religion, while its opponents are but an insignificant handful.

All the more reason, then, for full inquiry and free discussion. Inquiry and discussion are the very handmaids of Truth. They do ten thousand times more for the promotion of a good cause than all the hot-bed and hot-house training and the like artificial devices, that ever entered the imagination of man. Discussion is the deadliest foe that Falsehood can ever meet. Why, then, do men fly into such fits of terror and horror at every little attack upon Christianity,—allowing, for a moment, that Mr. Peabody's letter can be so termed,—that appears in the columns of a newspaper or other publication? Do they actually think so meanly of it as to suppose that it is endangered by such puny assaults? If the system has truth on its side it will go through the furnace ten times heated and come out unscathed.

Once entered into this question we find it spreading out on all sides of us, and cannot forbear from wandering into some of its most inviting quarters. But the "dire necessity" of space prevents an extension of the present article. We have not yet done with Mr. Wilmot's letter. In a future article we shall have something to say concerning what we regard as his misinterpretation of the French Revolution. We think we shall be able to show that, properly read, it furnishes a powerful argument, not for, but against his own positions.

The Cunard Company's clerks and servants at Liverpool, were treated to a visit to the *Great Eastern* at Holyhead by their employers.

THE HERALD AND THE RIVER NAVIGATION.

The *Morning Herald* of the 18th. has another article in reply to our remarks on the improvement of the River in which, while boasting that it "has fairly beaten" the *Journal*, it, in fact, only evinces its ignorance of the importance of the matter. Passing over the boast as a matter of very slight consequence, and over its misconstruction of the expression that our opposition to the present administration in its early existence "partook largely of bitterness," and also over the lame logic of the commencement of the third paragraph of its article, we come at once to the main question.

In stating that we have "endeavored to make our readers believe that the Government have been entirely neglectful of the River" the *Herald* merely succeeds in showing how little acquaintance it has with the matter at issue. The people of Carleton and Victoria know what amount of money has been expended on the improvement of the navigation, and with what results in facilitating the carrying trade, much better than a St John editor, who probably never gave the subject a thought, can tell them. A large proportion of the steamboat stock of the Fredericton and Woodstock steamers is owned here; the captains of two out of three of the boats are residents of Woodstock; almost all the numerous fleet of towboats is owned in these Counties; and they furnish nearly all the raftsmen. The people of these Counties may be supposed to know something about the matter. Besides, the expenditure upon the River is a matter of public record; every one who has admittance to the Journals of the House, or to the Reports of the Board of Works, knows what the expenditure has been from year to year. When, therefore the *Herald* intimates that we have been misleading the people on the subject, and proceeds ostentatiously to enlighten both them and us it only proves that its editor probably never gave the matter a thought, and thinks he has now made a wonderful discovery.

Let us take a glance at the matter in the light of common sense. The St. John River is at a certain pitch of water navigable from the city of Saint John itself to Little Falls in the County of Victoria, with the single break at Grand Falls, a distance of about 265 miles, 170 miles of which are above Fredericton. During the greater portion of this distance it runs through a country magnificent in every respect, whether with regard to its agriculture, lumber, or manufacturing advantages. In the raw materials of wealth, in opportunities for the profitable investment of capital and industry, in capacity for the support of population and for the production of food and the materials of physical comfort, it is unsurpassed, we believe, in British North America; while for the enterprise of its population and the briskness of its trade it is equal, if not superior, to any portion of New Brunswick. The only present means of communication with the sea for this region is the St. John River. In consequence of obstructions in some places, and the width of its bed in others, the river is navigable for our steamers but a small portion of the year. Now if there was no river where the Saint John runs would not the people of this district have an irresistible claim upon the Province for the construction of an artificial communication, a railway, whenever the Province chose to take upon itself the burden of such works? Most undoubtedly, inasmuch as the benefit to the upper St. John would not be a whit greater than that to the lower St. John, and the interest of both would be the same. The city of St. John has built for it, at the expense of the Province, a railway to Shediac, costing some nine or ten hundred thousand pounds. If we had no River the cost of procuring communication between the city and Little Falls, at the same rate, would be about two millions and a quarter! And yet while the navigation of the River is so imperfect and so uncertain, and yet improvable at a very moderate cost, and while on every mile of the railway to Shediac there is being expended in a few years some nine hundred thousand pounds, we when we put forward the claims of the River, have thrown in our teeth that there has been on it an expenditure of £1500 a year for some ten or twelve years—almost as much as would build two miles

of Railway! Surely we are expected to be grateful for the very smallest favor.

Let us examine the matter from another point of view. On merely local grounds our claim is strong, but in a national point of view it is vastly stronger. The St. John River is not expected to pay the interest on its cost; by some not even including expenses. Its indirect benefits, doubtless, he considerable, but they will be confined to a small portion of the Province. But were such a sum expended on the River as would render it navigable throughout the season to boats draught the profits direct and indirect to the Government and to the western part of the Province would be immense. Steamboats would ply regularly and continually; freights would be low; travelling on the River would become cheap, and the conditions would give a powerful impetus to trade, industry and settlement; wide extent of crown lands, stretching along the east side of the River more than a hundred miles, which are unsurveyed in the Province for agricultural purposes, would double and treble in value, and a rapidly increasing sale, the transportation of lumber would become much more certain; and, in fine, an impetus would be given to the settlement, the production of industry, and the trade of the country which would tell most favorably upon the Provincial Revenue and the national commerce.

The Hon. Charles Fisher, in moving the session of 1849, the Bill providing for an annual expenditure upon the River of £2,000, for five years, in reply to some mark from an opponent, said that he claimed for the River counties justice should ask for one or two hundred thousand pounds to make good water navigation. The higher sum, which would be to all the results which we have indicated, builds only twenty two miles of the Railway, which is scarcely expected to pay its running expenses! But more could be done with a comparatively insignificant sum. In the summer of 1858 Messrs. Brent and Grant, the latter of whom had afterwards charge of the improvement during the season of 1859, 1861, and 1862, made a survey of the Lake at the head of the St. John with respect to the feasibility and probable expense of damming them, in order to furnish a supply of water during the heat of summer. The result of their explorations and calculations is striking and important: they estimated that for £14,100 these could be built dams and locks to retain water sufficient to "increase the depth in the lower eight inches during one hundred days of the drought of Summer."

We have at hand no statistics of the trade by the River later than those of 1860. In that season the steamboats carried 10,000 barrels and the tow boats 24,000 barrels, in all 44,000; while about 6,000 had to be hauled in the winter. The steamers also carried 6,000 passengers. Yet the whole time during which the steamers ran, did not, if we are correctly informed, exceed three months.

We shall close with a hurried glance at the history of the improvements on the River, to show that the Government have not done their duty in the matter. The expenditure of the £2,000 a year already spoken of commenced in 1850, and continued through 1851 and 1852, under the superintendence of Mr. Grant. In 1853 Colonel MacLachlan was entrusted with the superintendence, and during that and the three following years labored at it, and assiduously, earning the commendation of the Chief Commissioner of Public Works, in his Reports for 1855 and 1856. But in 1857 began the reign of Simonsism, and Colonel MacLachlan was marked out as a victim. As the Government did not like to give an outright dismissal to an officer who had won the good opinion of the people by his zealous labors in the public service they got rid of him by stopping the supplies. In his report for 1858 he had estimated the sum needed to carry out the improvements which, from his acquaintance with the River he thought necessary at £4,000. In 1856 £1500 was expended; but in 1857 the work was confined almost wholly to the towing paths, and the sum expended was but £217, under the superintendence of Messrs. Miller and Ingraham.

In 1858 scarcely anything was done for the river, the same commissioners expending

£258, on the towing paths. The Government cannot plead the excuse that the weight of water prevented a greater outlay, for they provided in 1858, 1860 in the estimates, and that in towing paths, and in 1857 we believe a similar sum.

And while the river is thus neglected and railway communication between commercial metropolises and the upper St. John is also neglected, the Saint John Railroad creeps on, slowly but surely, through the country, the trade of which is the great source of its wealth and prosperity. The time is not far distant when the press of St. John will find the very measure for the advocacy of which we are taken to task by one of their number is a matter of even more importance to them than to us.

We have discussed this matter at length not that such a reply to the *Journal* was necessary, but that the public might be reminded of facts and considerations which seem too ready to be forgotten.

LOCAL TOPICS.

The weather and the river have been the topics of the week. Both have behaved in an interesting though unexpected manner. Last week we were expected to have a heavy fall of snow, but the weather has been much more mild, the atmosphere on Friday and Saturday was almost summer-like and on the latter day the *Bonnie* made another trip, the river being open. She reached Woodstock on Sunday morning, unloaded, and returned to Fredericton, and on Monday again left Woodstock. But the weather had changed, the river was running full and on Tuesday night and Wednesday forenoon we had a heavy fall of snow less than fifteen inches. The stream reached the Barony, thirty miles from Fredericton, but after lying there some time was obliged to turn down stream. We hear that she is frozen in near 16 miles from Fredericton. The river is now very high, and covered with ice. The air is comparatively warm, and the snow is not wanting tokens of a thaw.

On Monday evening the Saint John Society of Woodstock held its annual meeting. It numbers fifteen members, and the prospect of considerable increase. The following gentlemen were elected officers for the current year:—

- James Robertson, President; Alexander Gibson, 1st Vice do.; John Bell, 2nd Vice do.; Rev. H. J. M. Lardy, Chaplain; John T. Allan, Secretary; Hugh M. Lenn, Treasurer; Robert Donaldson, John Bell, Hay, and Wm. McKenzie, Com. of the Society.

The Society resolved to celebrate Andrews Day, the 30th instant, by a dinner at Messrs R. Donaldson, John Bell, John Edgar and James Edgar, who pointed a committee of arrangements was also resolved to take steps to have the Society incorporated at the next session of the Legislature.

WRECK OF THE INDIAN.—It is with regret that we learn by telegraph that a steamer, one of the hitherto very successful Canadian line, was wrecked off Joseph, near Guysborough, in Nova Scotia, at 5 a.m. on the 21st instant. The crew were drowned, and the vessel supposed to be a total loss.

The prisoner, Boyer, found guilty of manslaughter at the Court of Oyer and Terminer held lately in this county, sentenced by the Court to imprisonment with hard labor in the Provincial Penitentiary for the term of seven years, man Ganett, convicted of an assault with intent to kill, was sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour in the same place. Acting Deputy Sheriff J. left here on Saturday last with a team to convey the prisoners to their destination, which we presume has been successfully accomplished.—*Herald*.

The trial of Moore Ellis and 11 others for causing the death of John Cassin in Court yesterday, the jury returned a verdict of about five minutes, a verdict of Not Guilty.—*St. John*.

His Grace the Archbishop left yesterday evening in the steamer "Empire" for Halifax, where he will remain two months, and where all communications during that should be addressed to him.—*Freeman*.