

## THE ST. LAWRENCE NAVIGATION.

Our attention is recalled to the important subject of our foreign and inland carrying trade, by the recurrence of an exorbitantly high rate of foreign freights, and also by the prospect of an effectual check being ultimately established by the American bonding system. When it is recollected that the present cost of carrying a barrel of flour from Toronto to Liverpool amounts to 7s. 6d. sterling, or more than one third of its entire value, and that, late in the season, even this high rate is likely to be exceeded, the advantage of such a check being put to excessive rates must be apparent to our agricultural friends. Every shilling added to the freight of flour is so much taken from the value of their produce; and of course every shilling of reduction obtained by the facilities now afforded, of passing that produce in bond through the States, is a clear gain to them. We are well aware that, so soon as the reduction of duties in Britain takes place, the Western merchants will not be slow to avail themselves of the New-York route; but we do not apprehend any evil consequences to the colony from their doing so. The immediate result will be a decline in the rates of inland transportation, and sea-going freight, on the St. Lawrence line of navigation, and that to one extent sufficient to attract in this direction cargoes enough for a large amount of tonnage; and it will be strange indeed, if during the three years' continuance of the 4s. duty, we do not retain the whole of the carrying trade *outwards* in its present channel. The moderating effects of the American bonding system will certainly be experienced in a reduced, though remunerating, rate of freights, and we congratulate the millers and farmers of Canada on this important point being gained.

The termination, however, of the proposed three years of protection, will bring about a new order of things. Then, and not till then, will the comparative merits of the New-York and St. Lawrence routes be fully tested, the value of our great lines of internal conveyance ascertained, and the destinies of our commercial cities fixed. In the struggle which will assuredly arise, we foresee much advantage to the staple interests of Canada. So nicely will the advantages of both routes be balanced, and so vigorous we apprehend will be the competition, that, we have good reason to anticipate such a reduction in the charge of conveying produce from the interior of Canada to England, as will go far to compensate the loss of English protection, and enable us to triumph in a competition with other foreign markets. It is true that the merchants of the Lower Province, and more especially of Montreal, have something to fear in the diversion of the carrying trade to, what may turn out to be, a better channel; but we are not among those who entertain much fear of loss on this score. We cannot join in the cry to impose a tax on the English labourer for the sake of forcing our produce by the route of the St. Lawrence; neither do we fear that our direct export trade will be lost when it ceases to be protected.

We confess that it is no easy task at present to set forth reasons for this belief which will satisfy every one. Any inquiry, however, which is calculated to throw light on the question, cannot fail to interest our readers, and we shall proceed to make some calculations on the cost of forwarding, and observations on the nature of our navigation, which may at least assist our readers in coming to a conclusion, whether favourable or adverse. We must, however, guard against too rigorous a criticism, by stating, that our figures can only be regarded as close approximations to the truth, and that we do not vouch for *absolute*, though we claim the merit of *substantial*, accuracy.

We shall limit our attention in the present number to a comparison of the expense of voyages from a British port to Montreal and New York respectively. The latter possesses advantages both natural and acquired to the level of which we can never expect to rise, and the question that we propose consequently takes the form of a required by this admission. How much must the rate of freights between Montreal and Britain necessarily exceed the rate of freights between New-York and Britain? We do not wish to rest the answer to this enquiry on merely general grounds, and the only satisfactory solution we can give is to be found in a detailed estimate of certain charges which vary in these two trades. Those which are the same in both, we do not advert to, as they do not affect the result of our calculation. It must be premised that the Canada trade is necessarily a spring and fall trade. It cannot be done in mid-summer, and the early part of autumn: because, in the first instance, if spring shipments were delayed the advantage of the English markets would be in part lost, and an additional risk incurred from the heat of the weather; in the second, the fall shipments cannot be got off very early, because produce of the new crop does not reach Montreal to any great extent till October and November. Estimating the charges of spring and fall voyages to Montreal separately, we therefore take the early spring voyages, and the average fall voyages as to season, say those of the middle and end of October. The example selected is a ship of 520 tons register, built for the trade.

## Spring voyage, Liverpool to Montreal and back, present charges.

Insurance on hull, spars, &c., going and returning, of a ship of 520 tons valued at £15, £7,800 at 3½ per cent. . . . .	£273	0	0
Insurance on freight list outwards, £1000 at 1½ do. . . . .	15	0	0
Do. do. home-wards, £1000 at 1 do. . . . .	10	0	0
Pilotage below Quebec, upwards, 15½ feet draught, . . . . .	13	0	0
Do. do. downwards, 16½ do. . . . .	12	6	11
Do. above Quebec, upwards, 15½ do. . . . .	8	9	0
Do. do. downwards, 16½ do. . . . .	5	7	6
Towage from Quebec to Montreal, . . . . .	91	5	0
Do. Montreal to Quebec, . . . . .	52	10	0

£480 18 5

## Spring voyage from New-York to Liverpool, and back.

Insurance on ship of same size, £7,800 at 40s. per cent, £156	0	0	
Do. on freight list outwards, £900 at 25s. p. cent, . . . . .	11	5	0
Do. do. home-wards, £550 at 17s. 6d. do. . . . .	7	8	9
Pilotage, about . . . . .	10	0	0
Towage, occasional, . . . . .	15	0	0

£199 13 9

Net cost of Montreal over New-York voyage, . . . £281 4 8

## Fall voyage, Liverpool to Montreal, and back.

Insurance on ship out and home, at 6 p. cent on £7,800, £468	0	0	
Do. freight list out, £1000, 1½ per cent, . . . . .	15	0	0
Do. do. home, £1,000, 3½ per cent, . . . . .	42	0	0
Pilotage, as before, . . . . .	38	19	5
Towage in full, . . . . .	£143	15	0

Add lighterage, less allowance for towage saved thereby, . . . . . 60 0 0

203 15 0

£767 14 5

## Fall voyage from Liverpool to New-York, and back.

Insurance on ship out and home, £7,800 at 50s. p. cent, £195	0	0	
Do. on freight list out, £900 at 30s. per cent, . . . . .	13	10	0
Do. on do. home, £900 at 20s. per cent, . . . . .	9	0	0
Pilotage and towage, as before, . . . . .	25	0	0

£242 10 0

Net cost of Montreal over New-York voyage, . . . £525 4 5

It thus appears that the voyage to Montreal considerably exceeds that to New York in actual expense, especially in the fall, and we do not believe that any reduction of the balance against us can ever be made, except in the item of towage, which we are sure will be reduced, as one of the consequences of the completion of our great inland improvements.

On the other hand, it may be said that we have left out of the reckoning several drawbacks to the Montreal trade. There is first the assertion that extra men are required in the Montreal over the New-York trade. This we do not believe. Extra men may be employed; but to navigate a ship effectually across the Atlantic, to overcome the difficulties of the English channel, and encounter the storms of the Atlantic, requires as efficient a crew as to navigate the St. Lawrence and its gulf, except in the end of November and later, which part of the season we exclude from our calculation. The tonnage of ships employed in the New-York trade, it is said, is greater, and the advantage is thus secured to them. No doubt a few very large ships are found in that trade, but the average size of regular traders is not so much greater than that of our own as to exclude competition, and by sending our large barges to Quebec we can have our flour shipped in vessels as large as the largest of the New-York leviathans. Again, the loss of time in the winter is alleged as an objection to this trade; but as the loss is almost entirely a mere loss of interest on the capital invested, it can but slightly affect the calculation of the cost of carrying a barrel of flour; and we do not see what is to prevent our traders from making a winter voyage to some of the United States ports. The fact of one of our traders having made a winter voyage last season to Demerara (a much longer voyage), is a sufficient proof of what they might do if they were compelled to work at lower rates.

Having thus ascertained as nearly as possible the difference in the general expenditure of the two voyages, we shall now endeavour to distribute the extra cost on Montreal cargoes, so as to show the extent to which the freight of certain descriptions of produce is thereby affected. The first difficulty that meets us in this attempt is derived from the uncertainty, whether, after the rates of inland conveyance through Canada are reduced, any part of the saving can be laid on the outward cargoes of ships arriving from Great Britain. So long as the differential duties operate against the transmission of British goods through the States, we believe the whole or nearly the whole of the extra cost of the voyages might be laid on outward freights. We cannot, however, reason on the assumption of their permanence. We shall, therefore, apportion to the outward cargo, only a small part of the sum to be