

THE MONETARY TIMES

AND TRADE REVIEW,

With which has been incorporated the INTERCOLONIAL JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, of Montreal, the TRADE REVIEW, of the same city (in 1870), and the TORONTO JOURNAL OF COMMERCE.

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY MORNING.

SUBSCRIPTION—POST PAID.

CANADIAN SUBSCRIBERS, - \$2.00 PER YEAR
BRITISH " - 10s. 6d. STER. PER YEAR.
AMERICAN " - \$2.00 U.S. CURRENCY.
SINGLE COPIES, - 10 CENTS.

Represented in Great Britain by Mr. Jas. L. Foulds,
11 Bothwell St., Central Buildings,
Glasgow, Scotland.

Book & Job Printing a Specialty.

OFFICE: Nos. 64 & 66 CHURCH ST.

EDWD. TROUT, MANAGER.

TORONTO, CAN., FRIDAY, OCT. 24, 1884

THE HUDSON'S BAY ROUTE.

The importance to the North West of cheap freights of grain to Europe, could not easily be overrated. The desire to establish the Hudson Bay route to Europe is born of a desire to reduce to the lowest point, the rates of freight from the North West to the final markets for grain; and on the practicability of that route hangs more than it is possible to conceive at present. But it is necessary to proceed in all commercial undertakings with the prudence and caution which form a large element in commercial success. It is useless to build a railway to Hudson's Bay till we know that the Bay and Straits of Hudson are open a sufficient length of time each year, to make it possible to carry on a connected traffic with the road on a scale that will give some guarantee of profit. The question of the navigability of Hudson Strait, long enough each year to enable a vessel to make repeated voyages to Europe by this route, can be settled satisfactorily only by observation; and the voyage of the *Neptune* has distributed the corps of observation at points where they will be able to render an essential service to the country.

From the voyage of the *Neptune* itself, we get a preliminary essay, which it was not supposed would count for anything, but which is found to possess as much importance as could perhaps be expected from any isolated trip. If what the *Neptune* encountered in the Strait of Hudson were an average specimen of this navigation, we should be obliged to despair of its ever being of any value for commercial purposes; as an average, we are not justified in regarding it; it was probably exceptionally bad. But even this is not a point on which to dogmatize; at present, the safest thing to do is to regard the experience of the *Neptune* as isolated, and one from which no general conclusion can be drawn. But if we take the most favorable view, if we regard the present season as among the worst which are liable to be experienced in this navigation, then we have a specimen, not of an average season, but of the worst kind of season liable to occur.

In the strait, icebergs and field ice, fogs, blinding snow storms and gales were encountered. Four ice-grasped vessels were seen at one point; the *Neptune* herself was

injured, and intelligence was received of a schooner nipped in the ice a few weeks before. Dangerous reefs were found to exist in the Strait. Sometimes the masses of ice extended as far as the eye could reach, and some of it was forty-five feet thick. The theory that no icebergs were ever met in the Strait, was opposed to recorded facts, as it is contradicted by the experience of the *Neptune*. There is nothing to prevent ice coming down Fox Channel from a point far up in the Arctic circle. August is probably the best month in the year for the navigation of the Strait; and it was in August that the *Neptune* passed through into the Hudson's Bay. At a still later period there was an unusual number of icebergs in the Atlantic in the neighborhood of Newfoundland; but most of these probably came from Baffin's Bay. Their moving late in the season down from Baffin's Bay would be no reason why field ice and icebergs should be later than usual in coming through Hudson Strait. The detachment of icebergs is not a thing so dependent on the meteorological conditions of any month in the year, that if the number of them be large in Baffin's Bay in July, they will be more than usually numerous in Hudson Strait in August. The fact that more icebergs than usual were seen near Newfoundland in the early days of September is no proof that ice was found in exceptionally large quantities in Hudson Strait in August.

But if we take the summer of 1884 as a specimen of the worst seasons for navigation in Hudson's Strait, we should have no means of determining how often such seasons are liable to occur. The periodicity of the seasons there probably obeys the same law as it does here; and if the cycle be completed every few years, as is probable, a bad season must recur at such near intervals as render dependence on this navigation for commercial purposes a perilous thing.

The experience of one voyage, made in in August, counts for more than a voyage any other month; because by that time, the theory is, the ice has generally moved away. The observation of the state of the Strait in winter will be interesting, but for the purposes of navigation it will have no value. If both Straits and Bay of Hudson were open in winter, navigation would be impossible, since no vessel could penetrate the fringe of ice which clings to the shores of the Bay for a distance of some miles. What we want to know is the condition of the Strait during the months in which there is a possibility of navigation. To complete that season the observations would have to be carried on till August next; and then we should only have the narrow experience of the months which comprise a single season. This would not be enough to found any general conclusion upon; though there would be an advantage in having the observation to complete a season made up of parts of two different years, for in that way something of the climatic changes, which go to form a cycle of seasons, might be observed. The present duty is to await the accumulation of facts which are to determine the navigability for commercial purposes of the Bay and Strait; all that can at present be said is that the outlook is not encouraging.

THE BREAD TAX.

The Ontario millers, at a recent meeting in Toronto, resolved "That in view of the tariff not sufficiently protecting the milling industry, the Government be memorialized to raise the duty on flour to \$1 per barrel." The millers will probably all or nearly all sign the petition asking for the increase; but that would not be a sufficient reason why it should be granted. If the Canadian milling interest is at present discriminated against, if the duty on wheat is relatively higher than the duty on flour—and this American millers seem to admit—they have a just ground of complaint. But the remedy should be applied in the right place and be of the right kind. The only reason given by the millers for desiring to have the duty on flour doubled is that they want more protection. Unfortunately the plea is one which the Minister of Finance has on some occasions admitted to be valid, and the fact of his having done so he may find somewhat embarrassing. But there is one loop-hole of escape. It is only in the case of new industries that the allegation of insufficient protection, by interested parties, has been deemed a sufficient ground for increasing the duties, and milling is not a new industry; it is, in fact, one of the oldest.

But it cannot be said that there is no danger of the prayer of the petition being granted. Why has there not been a re-adjustment of the duties on wheat and flour? Why has the complaint been left in the mouth of the millers that these duties operate to their disadvantage and in favor of the American miller? Why are they enabled to point to a large number of mills in enforced idleness, and millions of capital invested in them unproductive? Is it because the farmer has been induced to believe that he has an interest in the maintenance of the present duty on wheat, and that any abatement of it would be to his injury? If this be so, and if the Minister of Finance finds that he cannot decrease the wheat duty without losing political support, among the farmers, the present demand for an increase in the flour duty is not without peril. The millers are not numerous, like the farmers, and they count comparatively few votes; if they had been as numerous as the farmers, their complaint that the relative proportions of the two duties work injuriously to them, would have been listened to before now. If that adjustment had been made, this new demand for an increase of the duty on flour, would not have been heard.

The bread tax is the counterpoise of the coal tax. Nova Scotia insists on the maintenance of the coal tax; the bread tax is supposed to be in the interest of Ontario and the North West. In such cases, log-rolling becomes the order of the day. But if these taxes go together they had better depart together. The *Halifax Chronicle* very properly opposes the proposal of the millers to increase the duty on flour. It would add greatly to the satisfaction of all who are opposed to the bread and coal taxes, not on political, but on economical grounds, if the Nova Scotia press, which shows becoming vigor in its attacks on the bread tax, would at the same time, extend its condemnation to the equally obnoxious and indefensible coal tax.