

public money have been injudiciously expended, and that the cost of various portions of the works have been greater than under judicious management it might have been; we have never doubted that the benefits which would accrue from them would far outweigh those evils; that on their completion they would form a great source of national wealth; that they would tend to make this a prosperous and united province, and to connect us indissolubly with the parent state.

MR. WATTS, M.P.P. AND AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION.

In a late number of the *Sherbrooke paper*, we find an account of an Agricultural Dinner, at Kingsey, Eastern Townships, at which Mr. Watts, the Member for Drummond, was present, and took the opportunity of delivering some of his peculiar opinions on the subject of Agricultural Protection. Mr. Watts is, our readers are doubtless aware, a gentleman excellently learned in the mysteries of fattening cattle, and in the course of this business has imbibed certain politico-economical opinions, which he takes an opportunity of setting forth on every possible occasion. His theory is comprised in certain high sounding dicta, which although not very consistent in themselves, or altogether intelligible to ordinary minds, find great favor with some of Mr. Watts' Agricultural friends, who on the strength of them have given him the cognomen of the 'farmer's friend,' and identify him on all possible occasions with high prices and fat cattle. On the occasion of the Dinner at Kingsey, Mr. Watts appeared once more, as the play bills would have it, in "his old character," and repeated those learned opinions which have gained for him such distinguished success. Above all, he insisted upon his favorite assertion, that the effect of the Agricultural Duties is not to raise the price to the consumer, and he did this in his usual clear, concise, and original manner. Thus he commenced by congratulating his agricultural friends on the more favorable state of their prospects now than in 1842, which he particularly impressed on them was due to "legislative enactments." "In 1842," said he, "we were compelled, in exchanging markets with our neighbours across the lines, to do so at a loss of 20 per cent.—the consequence was that our farmers were reducing their stock to the narrowest limits, and foreigners supplied our markets. Subsequently we were placed on a footing of reciprocity; and general content, and increased and increasing exertions and enterprise have been the consequence, ever since."

This is so far intelligible, that it coincides with the opinion entertained generally by the public, that the effect of these duties has been to raise the price of produce, and put a certain amount into the pocket of the farmer. But strangely enough, although Mr. Watts admits the gain to the farmer, he will not admit that that gain comes out of the pockets of the public, or that Agricultural Protection costs them one solitary farthing in keeping up. He repeated this over and over again in reference to the Commissariat cattle, which it will be recollected Mr. Watts sought to subject to duties, and which, he says, if not taxed, "will defeat protection altogether." His arguments and assertions on this subject, if placed under different heads, will stand thus:—

1. The farmer cannot exist without protection.
2. Allowing cattle for the use of the Commissariat to pass free of duty will defeat protection.
3. The effect of protection on the Commissariat will not "cost them a single farthing."

Thus it would appear that the farmer is to be ruined without losing a single farthing, and benefitted without gaining a single farthing; and this extraordinary result is to be produced by the simple use or non-use of the marvellous word "protection."

Another of Mr. Watts' opinions is, that although, if not subject to duties, the Commissariat will certainly go to the States for their supplies, they will do so, not because that is the *cheapest*, but because "it is the *nearest* market,"—a distinction so ingenious that it must have puzzled Mr. Watts' agricultural friends who, we dare say, had previously regarded cheapness and dearness as relative terms, very much influenced by distance, and who had considered that although an article might be very cheap at one place, it might also be very dear at another. Thus, although the fact that the stock of the Townships is as good, and the farms as fertile as those of the States, is gratifying to the inhabitants of Montreal and the Province generally, yet if they find that to obtain that stock costs them 25 per cent. more than they can get it elsewhere, they will, we fear, in spite of Mr. Watts' assertion to the contrary, consider

it *dear*, and not less so because originally, and at 150 miles distance, it was *cheap*.

Nor does the character that Mr. Watts gave of himself and brother agriculturists strike us as less singular. Speaking of the press of Montreal (which, it seems, he dealt hardly with the opinions of the honorable gentleman) he observed,—"That press, like ourselves and the rest of the community, are bread and butter hunters,"—an opinion, we confess, we should have hesitated to pronounce, but which, coming from so high an authority, we are bound implicitly to believe!

Mr. Watts wound up by telling the farmers, that they had the power in their own hands to prevent Government from interfering with these duties, and recommended them strenuously to do so by returning members to Parliament favorable to what he assured them were their interests. Such advice, coming from so disinterested a party, would of course have its weight, although why the farmers should so exert themselves in favor of a question which Mr. Watts took so much pains to convince them involved not the "cost of a single farthing to the public," and consequently (one would suppose,) not that value to themselves, does appear strange.

We confess, however, that there is one fact stated by Mr. Watts which, as far as the public are concerned, we do regard as satisfactory, and that is, that it is on account of the distance he is removed from the Montreal market *alone*, that the Township farmer requires protection. "This is our great drawback, and it is corrected by our present law," said Mr. Watts. Now in two years the Portland Rail-Road will be completed, by which the Townships will be brought within six hours distance of Montreal; and accordingly that objection can, after that time, no longer prevail. Supposing, therefore, that Mr. Watts should continue up to that time to believe all that he believes at present, when the Rail-Road is finished he must become a Free Trader, and we fully expect that his first act will be to go to the Legislature and tell them that since the "great drawback" is removed, his friends and himself are quite content to forego an advantage that was got out of no-one, came from nowhere, but that still, by some strange hocus-pocus calculation, they believed to be of enormous value to themselves.

OUR PROSPECTS.

Whilst it is a matter of no little satisfaction to us that we have succeeded in influencing public opinion, and giving to Free Trade doctrines that importance in the eyes of the colonists which it was so necessary they should command, we cannot conceal from ourselves that we have drawn forth some opposition, and that we have not been more fortunate than other supporters of new doctrines, in arousing the jealousy or mistrust of the crowd of men of small minds and natures who make it a point to rail at everything that does not proceed directly from themselves. We have felt this, we say, and we were to a great degree prepared for it. Our course was too bold—maybe too honest—not to offend some, and to interfere with the dearly prized interests of others, who claim a voice in the direction of the public mind. If it was a sin in the eyes of these people to have taken the lead in the great question of the day, it was a still greater sin to have done so in the spirit and with the determination which we have exhibited. Had the "ECONOMIST" been content to follow, instead of claiming to lead, we have reason to believe that our course would have been more smooth, though less beneficial to the public interest, and certainly far less creditable to ourselves. We should not then have had to encounter the bitter hostility of a portion of the city press, or the less open though not less rancorous hostility of men who whilst they had not the courage to oppose us, never really wished success to our cause. Instead of scurrility, and abuse, and secret rancour, we should have received the meek-mouthed praise of a host of hollow friends, and our feeble and inefficient advocacy of a good cause would have been trumpeted forth as the greatest of virtues. Two courses, in short, lay open to us at starting—either by temporizing and shirking the real points at issue, to please those who were not sincerely our friends, or by pursuing a bolder course

"Take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing, end them."

We preferred the latter course. We knew it to be the most difficult, but it was the most honest, and in the end the best both for ourselves and the country.

When we look back over the numbers of our journal—and still more when we note public opinion abroad, we feel that we have very little to reproach ourselves with in the management of our great cause. That we have committed some errors is likely