

with the mother country? Who amongst our Provincial Ministry, or in the ranks of the Opposition, has manifested such administrative talent as to justify the public confidence being implicitly reposed in him? Until these questions are satisfactorily answered—until it is shown that there are some persons at the helm of affairs competent to guide the political vessel through the rocks and shoals which beset her course, we shall not hesitate to raise our warning voice, disregarding of the taunts or obloquy with which we may be assailed; nor will we cease from the pursuance of our object, until the public mind is thoroughly aroused.

### THE NAVIGATION LAWS.

At the present moment there is perhaps no object of equal importance to the well-being of this colony that can be sought for from the mother country, as that of bringing about a repeal of the British Navigation Laws, in as far as they affect our interests. Well may we exclaim, in the words of the memorial lately presented to Government by the Free-Trade Association, "This Colony is now labouring under the loss of protection on the one hand, and the crushing effects of the severest restrictions on the other." Protection, or preference for our products in the markets of the mother country, there is none now of any value; but all the restrictions that were imposed on us as an equivalent for those lost advantages, are left in full vigour, depressing our industry and paralysing our commercial enterprise.

Whilst a reciprocal state of things existed, we were content, although, on a review of our past circumstances, we candidly believe that England had the best of the compact. It was, in the language of Mr. Gladstone, "a mutual sharing of benefits, or rather a mutual bearing of burdens." But now the case is altered: the *benefits* are destroyed; but the *burdens* are left to oppress and gall the industry of our hard-working population. And what are the burdens? We cannot too often draw public attention to them. First, The differential duties; but next, and by far the most important, the restrictions imposed on our commerce by the ruinous operation of the British Navigation Laws. Let us not be misconstrued. Let no timid person turn upon us here, and accuse us of disloyalty, or a desire to weaken the springs of England's naval grandeur. To such we would reply, that our love of country cannot be shaken, nor ought it to be questioned. But we have a duty to perform to ourselves, as well as our successors; and craven must be the individual among us who refuses, at this crisis, to exert himself to obtain those comprehensive reforms that our peculiar situation renders manifest and necessary. At present we shall confine ourselves to the discussion of the most important of them,—*the repeal, absolute with reference to Canada, of the British Navigation Laws!*

Of what avail is it to the Canadian to raise abundant supplies of wheat and other staples for exportation while these laws are in force? Can he procure their conveyance to British markets on as favourable terms as the farmer of the United States can forward his? No. But why? Because the British Navigation Laws restrict him to the use of British ships, depriving him of every option, and compelling him to use such at exorbitant rates of freight, although foreign vessels could be procured on greatly reduced terms. The interests of the Canadian farmer—nay, of the Canadian people—are thus yearly sacrificed to an extent that, we venture to assert, they have no adequate conception of. Averse to making unsupported assertions, we will appeal to facts and figures to prove what we affirm respecting the intolerable effects of this monopoly of our carrying trade thus unjustly secured to the British shipowner. Let us compare the rates of freight between New York on the one hand, and Montreal on the other, and Great Britain, that have been current during the present summer; and the result will be seen to bear out what we have asserted.

#### Rates of Freight current at New York in the year 1846.

		To Liverpool.
May 13,.....	2s. 3d. per brl.	8d. per bushel.
" 30,.....	3s. "	9d. "
June 13,.....	3s. "	9d. "
" 27,.....	2s. "	8d. "
July 11,.....	2s. 3d. "	8d. "
" 18,.....	2s. 3d. "	8d. "
Average,.....	2s. 6½d.	8½d.

#### Rates of Freight current at Montreal in the year 1846.

		To Liverpool.
May 18,.....	4s. 3d. per brl.	8s. 3d. per qr.
" 28,.....	4s. 3d. "	8s. 3d. "
June 11,.....	5s. 3d. "	9s. 3d. "
" 26,.....	6s. "	10s. "
July 11,.....	6s. "	10s. "
" 22,.....	5s. 9d. "	10s. "
Average,.....	5s. 1½d.	9s. 3½d. per qr.
		1s. 2½d. per bushel.

What do these tables exhibit? An average less to the Canadian producer of 2s. 7d. stg. or nearly 3s. 2d. cy. per brl. on his flour, and 5½d. stg. or about 7d. cy. per bushel on his wheat, by being restricted to the employment of British vessels. Canada will this year in all probability export fully 450,000 brls. flour, and 400,000 bushels wheat, besides other staples of great importance, but we will restrict our calculations to those main articles for the sake of clearness and brevity; and what amount of loss will be entailed on our producers in consequence of the laws complained of? A simple calculation will show it to be no less than £71 250 on flour, and £16,666 13s. 4d. on wheat, making a total £87,916 13s. 4d. on these two articles alone! Will it be believed that the country is in its senses, if it submit any longer to such manifest injustice, without making an effort to get rid of the laws that oppress it! Why should this colony make a yearly sacrifice of nearly £90,000 for the benefit of the British shipowner! We appeal to it then, as friends having one common interest, to be up and doing. Let the whole country arouse itself, and *petition*. Besiege the Imperial Parliament with petitions, while it is yet in session; let the country present, as it were, *one unanimous petition* against the continuance of these oppressive laws. Oppressive, did we say nay, iniquitous towards Canada, if their maintenance is persevered in after their effects are clearly pointed out.

Ere we conclude this article, we have a duty to perform to the monopolists themselves, the British shipowners, or the few representatives of that class who dwell among us. It is not our intention wantonly to injure even a hair of their heads. Poor men, we know their weakness: we know they plead that they cannot sail or build their ships as cheap as foreigners; that they cannot compete; and therefore must be protected! Out upon such cant, for it will not avail them. If the navigation laws are maintained, a supposition which we can scarcely conceive possible, still they will be forced to compete with their American rivals, because a continuance of this monopoly will drive the trade effectually from the shores of the St. Lawrence to those of the Hudson. The whole volume of the Western trade, including that of Western Canada, will be thereby impelled to the port of New York; and what then will be the consequence to British ships? Will they not then have to compete with Americans for the conveyance of our surplus produce? Ay, will they; and that too in Jonathan's own waters. Might it not be as well then, since this competition must ultimately be established, to allow him rather to come into Canadian waters to compete for this valuable trade, than to drive the trade by monopoly into his very arms. It appears to us that there cannot be two opinions about it. But here we must conclude for the present.

There are other phases of this important question which we shall advert to hereafter.

### PROGRESS OF FREE-TRADE OPINIONS IN THE COLONY.

The question of Free Trade has at length become an all-absorbing one in this Colony, and we seldom take up a paper in which the subject is not treated after some fashion or other. This is, of course, gratifying to us, and would be still more so if we did not every now and then find these writers falling foul of the *Economist*, and abusing us, without rhyme or reason, for having been guilty of the presumption of pointing out the course which they admit it is necessary to follow. Now, this is rank ingratitude. To adopt our arguments, and then abuse us, is, we think even the Protectionists must admit, rather too bad. We have no objection to the severest test of criticism our opponents may choose to apply,—are open to conviction, if we have erred,—and will receive instruction at the hands of our opponents, if they can give it; but we must protest against being robbed of our fair portion, and called hard names in return. We cannot consent to see the cause of which we were for a period almost the sole advocate, progress and be told at the same time that we are very mischievous and presumptuous persons.

What has the *Economist* done that should not have been done at this crisis? We have been the first to proclaim the truths of Free Trade in this Colony. Some people have looked upon that as a sin; but even those persons must admit that the time was auspicious for such a work. We were on the eve of great changes, without being at all prepared for them. Every one saw the coming storm, but none knew how to meet it. What was to be done? Prepare the public mind for the change. Show that, bad as the prospect appeared, it was not so dark as the fears of many painted it; that Free Trade, fully carried out, was not such a terrible thing, after all; that there was something to be gained as well as something to be risked, and that in the end we might, (with the necessary prudence and energy,) find ourselves better off than before.

Well, we have done, or attempted to do, this. Even our contemporaries,—though some of them may sneer,—will scarcely attempt to deny our labours in the Free Trade cause. Let them take their own fyles, and see how much they have contributed to