

to at slightly greater length, illustrate the old fashioned ideas of political economy which were current the world over in those early times. There is this much to be said for our fathers, that their legislation, much as it is opposed to the best considered doctrines of modern political economy, may have been justified in some degree by the exceptional circumstances in which they found themselves—circumstances which may have prevented the unchecked operation of the laws of demand and supply from working out the greatest good of the greatest number. I refer to an act for prohibiting the exportation of raw hides, sheep or calf skins out of the province, excepting to Great Britain (for which I do not know that the apology I have referred to can be offered), and the act against forestallers and regrators, to which the observation does apply. It provides that:—

“From and after the publication hereof, whatsoever person or persons shall buy, or cause to be bought, any victuals of any kind whatsoever, coming by land or water towards any market or fair already established, or that may hereafter be established, in this province, to be sold in the same (except at the distance of ten miles at least from the place where such market or fair is to be held or kept), or shall make any bargain, contract or promise, for the having or buying the same, or any part thereof, or shall make any motion by word, letter, message or otherwise, to any person or persons, for the enhancing the price or dearer selling of any kind of victuals or provisions for the use of man, coming by land or water towards any market or fair as aforesaid, shall be deemed and adjudged a forestaller.

“And be it further enacted that whatsoever person or persons shall by any means regrate, obtain, or get into his or their hands or possession, in any fair or market, any corn, hay, fish, sheep, lambs, calves, beef, swine, pigs, geese, capons, hens, chickens, pigeons,

hares, or other dead victuals whatsoever, that shall be brought to any fair or market whatsoever, within this province, to be sold, and do sell the same again in any fair or market, holden or kept in the same place, within one month after purchasing or selling the same, shall be accepted, reported and taken for a regrator or regrators.”

To make the picture complete, we must import a shadow or two from an earlier statute on the same subject, which recites that:—

“Whereas, large quantities of live stock, fresh provisions and other articles, are imported into this province for sale from the neighboring colonies, and divers persons make a practice of engrossing the same immediately upon the arrival thereof, to the great prejudice of the inhabitants:— Be it enacted, etc.; That all kinds of live stock (oxen and sheep excepted), all dead provisions, grain, hay, roots or garden stuff, which shall be imported for sale into any port of this province after publication hereof, shall by the importers thereof be brought to some public wharf and there openly exposed for sale for forty-eight hours, and public notice shall be given thereof through the town or place where the same shall be so imported, by the common cryer; and no such live stock or dead provisions whatsoever, grain, hay, roots or garden stuff, shall, during the said forty-eight hours, be sold or contracted for in gross, to or with any person or persons whatsoever, on penalty of the forfeiture of the article or articles so sold or bought.” This enactment was restricted so as not to apply to flour, bread, or biscuit, or fish.

It certainly requires an effort of the imagination to place ourselves in the position of the community in which a law like this was not only tolerated, but was probably of absolute necessity to prevent the greatest hardships from being suffered by the great bulk of the inhabitants. But if this statute