

1875. 21ST MAY. 1875.

Bryce McMurrich & Co.

IMPORTERS AND WHOLESALE

DRY GOODS MERCHANTS.

WAREHOUSE

34 YONGE ST., TORONTO.

N.B.—Large additions to stock received ex STEAMERS
and SAILING SHIPS lately arrived at Montreal.THE MONETARY TIMES,
AND TRADE REVIEW.

TORONTO, CAN., FRIDAY JUNE 25, 1875

OUR FINANCE MINISTER.

The office of the Finance Minister of Canada is one of such immense importance that the actions of its incumbent affect not remotely but most directly every interest in the country. Every commercial and manufacturing interest is affected by the tariff; all our banks are affected by the way in which he manages the Government deposits and remittances; and there is not a family of consumers in the Dominion but has an interest in the fiscal policy he inaugurates. The office of Minister of Finance should be, almost entirely independent of politics; it matters scarcely a straw whether he who holds it is a Liberal or a Conservative. There is only one question—that of Free Trade—in which political influences might give shape to his recommendations. But even Free Trade is not a party question in the proper sense of the term; it was a great Conservative, Sir Robert Peel, that inaugurated it in England, though it is generally considered a part of the Liberal creed. And in the United States the party most nearly corresponding to our Liberal party is rank Protectionist. Let it be understood, then, that in discussing the question now before us, we have no political object whatever.

On this subject, then, we feel bound to say that we merely reflect the judgment of many amongst our commercial community in expressing a very grave doubt as to the fitness of our present Minister of Finance for his position. We might say more, and observe that such doubt and misgiving is now all

but universal. Mr. Cartwright has had no experience to fit him for dealing with matters of trade, and his attempts to regulate the tariff have been marked by serious bungling. When attempting to impose duties on certain classes of dry goods, his mistakes were so evident as to compel an entire remodelling of his scheme. A far more serious matter is that repeal of the discriminating duty on tea, the effect of which has been to destroy a direct trade which it was our interest, as a country, to foster; scarcely the shadow of benefit to the consumer has resulted from the change, which apparently came about rather by accident than design if we may judge by announcements made beforehand in Ministerial organs. But it is with Mr. Cartwright as with some other men who deal with matters in which they are not practically conversant; they cannot afford to acknowledge too many errors, and hence they are dead to remonstrances. There were remonstrances in this case in abundance, but no amount of argument could prevail to have the mistake rectified; the result is the destruction of our direct tea trade and all the benefits that flowed from it. New York now does the business which formerly was enjoyed by Montreal and Toronto; yet we venture to say that no single householder in Canada can appreciate any diminution in his expenditure in consequence. The repeal was operative enough to destroy a wholesale trade, where small profits on large amounts are all that is required; but the change was not of that importance as to make any practical difference when filtered down through the channels of retail trade till it reached the consumer. The repeated attempts to regulate the sugar duties, all ending in the same unsatisfactory way, and finally resulting in such serious injury to the refining business that it is almost destroyed, all prove the same incapacity to grasp with fiscal questions. These matters are too serious to be trifled with. Personal feeling must give way when the public good is in question. Our mercantile and manufacturing interests are not so prosperous that they can bear tampering with; in fact, they cannot bear an injudicious handling at all. We do need at the head of the Finance Department a man who understands mercantile questions in general, and who will be willing to take pains and make careful enquiries respecting such matters as he may not be practically conversant with; and a person in that position should not be too proud to take advice.

The manner in which Mr. Cartwright has managed the Government deposits is open to serious objection. The

amount of money deposited in small and new banks is more than can be justified by the public interest, and we doubt much if the sums deposited could be obtained in certain cases without serious embarrassment. The notice too, which was lately issued was of so vague a character as to cause needless alarm, and the whole country is now feeling the effects of it. If a general notice had been issued—(and we do not quarrel with the issue of a notice) it should have been after full and careful calculations of actual requirements. A specific sum ought to have been named, subject to only the usual modification of more or less; then, the banks interested would have known what to prepare for, and make arrangements accordingly. But nothing can be worse than vague intimations. The only way to treat such is to prepare for the worst.

RELATIVE TAXATION.

A comparison of the taxation of each of the Provinces for Dominion purposes cannot be very satisfactorily made for various reasons. Of these we may mention the two principal, which are: 1st, That the amount of free goods imported by some of the Provinces is very much larger than in others; and 2nd, That a very large percentage of the importations of the Province of Ontario, and a small per centage of the goods consumed in some of the others, are obtained through the port of Montreal, and go to swell the returns of Quebec instead of the Province which is their ultimate destination.

The per centage of duty paid by each Province upon its total importations, dutiable and free, during 1874, is thus stated in the official records:

Ontario.....	08.84
Quebec.....	12.83
Nova Scotia.....	12.56
New Brunswick.....	13.72
Manitoba.....	03.75
Columbia.....	16.13
Prince Edward Island.....	11.50

So far as Ontario and Quebec are concerned, the nearest approach to accuracy we can obtain is by taking them together, and in this way their contribution to the Customs' duties will be seen to be 10.88 per cent. "This calculation," says the Customs' Commissioner, "still leaves the combined Provinces of Ontario and Quebec represented as having a smaller percentage of Customs' duties than any other Province except Manitoba, but the same result would not be attained were the calculations made to embrace all other sources of revenue, because those Provinces consume a much larger proportion of exciseable goods, such