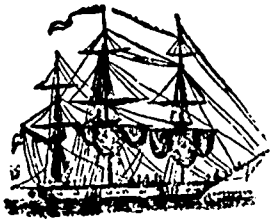


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 1846.

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BRITISH CONNECTION.

Amongst the various sophistries used by the advocates of our present vicious commercial policy, we know of none so little entitled to respect, as that which seeks to identify Free Trade within this colony, with the severance of our connection with the mother country. And yet we cannot but admit that many have been led away by the noisy protestations of exclusive loyalty on the part of those who have mixed up these two questions, and whose main object apparently is, to maintain and perpetuate existing abuses. Such men are to be found in every country: they are implicit believers in the universal truth of the maxim, "Whatever is, is right"; they are zealous supporters of what they call, the "Constitution by law established"; active supporters, and convenient instruments, of every existing Administration; and determined opponents of reforms of every description. With them, the wisdom of our ancestors is everything; the experience of the present age, is nothing. Every change, with them, is an innovation; every reformation, a revolution, which must lead to the destruction of the social fabric.

Whilst we do not deny that the conservative spirit which writers of this character diffuse, is not unattended occasionally with some benefit, where a reckless desire of change manifests itself in a community; we much consider that it is fraught with much danger in our present circumstances. It must never be lost sight of, that in this case it is not we, but the British Government, who are the agitators in the Free-Trade movement; it is not we who have repudiated, but the British Government who have withdrawn, Protection! We would have continued to be the Conservatives; but the British Government have shown themselves to be the Destructives! Again and again have we reiterated this obvious truth, and yet we scarcely ever take up a paper in which we do not find the Free-Trade Association designated as the cause, instead of, as it manifestly is, the effect of the introduction of Free-Trade principles into the British legislature. An intelligent merchant at Quebec, with whom we recently conversed, expressed his decided opinion, that it was through the influence which the formation of a Free-Trade Association in the colonies was calculated to give to the opinions of Sir R. PEEL, that he was mainly indebted for the ultimate success of his measure, and we see by the *London Standard* of the 5th October, that the Free-Trade Association here was got up through the exertions of Sir R. Peel's Government! We should indeed lay ourselves open to the charge of that vanity, with which we have been occasionally taxed by our opponents, were we to attempt gravely to answer a charge, which implies in us so powerful an influence over British councils, and which is as ridiculous as it is unfounded: but in the *Standard* that charge is coupled with the accusation, that the Free-Trade agitation is "shaded by a manifest disposition to break off all connection with the Metropolitan State."

The simple and conclusive answer to this charge is to be found in the fact, that whilst the Protectionists of every kind, both here and in England, have, in furtherance of their designs to cajole or

terrify the British Government, held out directly or obliquely the threat of separation from the mother country, Free-Traders have consistently and invariably rested their arguments mainly on their tendency to strengthen and perpetuate the connection now subsisting between us. Keeping this point steadily in view, Free-Traders' exertions have been directed, by acting on public opinion, to impress upon our Legislature the policy of totally repealing the Differential Duties, and of urging on the British Government the modification of the Navigation Laws and the opening of the St. Lawrence to foreign vessels: the former being merely a response to the unconditional invitation held out by the Imperial Parliament in the *British Possessions Act*; and the latter, a corollary from the principles which now govern Imperial legislation on Colonial subjects.

We shall not now enter on the justice and expediency of these our objects, they have been irrefragably proved in the pages of this journal, but we ask, What is there anti-British in their tendency? Are we the enemies of British connection, because we seek to make this a prosperous and attached colony, by urging on our legislature the pursuance of a similar policy to that which the Imperial legislature has adopted at the instance of the British nation? And are we hostile to British supremacy because we seek to identify our policy with hers? Apparently our opponents imagine that the best way to unite us to Great Britain is to separate our interests; that the best mode to cement our connection is to make the people dissatisfied with their condition. Like Master Slender in the play, they would say of our union, "if there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it on better acquaintance," and "upon familiarity will grow more contempt."

But, say our opponents, Great Britain enriches the colony by an enormous outlay therein for the maintenance of the military force, which she sends for its protection. Granted: but does she not regulate the amount of that outlay, and the extent of that force, according to her own pleasure, and has she not distinctly admitted that she has no constitutional right to tax her colonies on that account? Is it no advantage to her to have such stations for her troops as may enable her to concentrate them at any time she may think proper, so that she may retain the political power and influence which she now possesses, and the loss of which would be destructive to her greatness? Is it no advantage to her to have faithful allies and loyal subjects in countries where, if the bond of connection were severed, she might in case of differences with foreign nations have enemies to contend against? Is it no advantage to her to have a market on which she can rely, even when her manufactures and other products may be shut out of foreign countries, by hostile tariffs?

Whilst thus asserting the advantages which Great Britain derives from her colonies, we are not insensible to those which she bestows, and which we admit to be an ample equivalent. To be united by the ties of allegiance with a country renowned alike for her achievements in arms, and in the liberal arts,—a country which has planted the germs of civilization and liberty in every region of the habitable globe,—which adopts in her colonies the same enlightened policy by which she governs at home—is a source of pride to every Briton, and we unhesitatingly say of that connection, ESTO PERPETUA!

THE RECIPROcity PRINCIPLE.

The progress of truth is slow but sure. The human mind is so prone to suspicion that it requires many efforts before .. can bring itself to examine that which is new. When it does so, it is rather in a spirit to reject than adopt. Individual interests cry out against novelty, and national jealousy as frequently steps in to give a colour to private clamour. This is just now shown in the opposition which France and some other countries are offering to the progress of Free Trade. The fact that England has adopted those principles is considered a sufficient reason for rejecting them. England, say they, has been influenced in this matter by a consideration of her own interests; those interests are necessarily opposed to ours,—ergo, Free Trade is bad.