

— No. 3. —

NEW
BRUNSWICK.

(No. 17.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from Sir *W. M. G. Colebrooke* to Lord *John Russell*.

My Lord,

Fredericton, New Brunswick, 8 June 1841.

REFERRING to my despatch No. 10, dated 29th May 1841, with which I forwarded a memorial to the Queen, relative to the proposed alteration in the timber duties, I enclose to your Lordship copy of a paper drawn up by a gentleman who possesses much experience on the subject, explanatory of the mode in which he considers that the duties might be modified, with the least inconvenience to the inhabitants of these provinces.

I entertain a hope that the demand for timber in the American and West Indian markets will be progressively extended, and may eventually afford an equivalent for losses which may be apprehended from the effect of competition in England.

At St. Andrew's, I am informed that framed houses are constructing for the negroes in the West Indies, and that timber is exported from either side of the St. Croix, as the markets may be favourable in the United States, or in England and her colonies.

I have, &c.

(signed) *W. M. G. Colebrooke.*

No. 3.
Sir *W. M. G. Colebrooke* to Lord
John Russell,
8 June 1841.

Enclosure in No. 3.

THE deep interest felt in New Brunswick, in the proposed alteration in the duty, and more especially in the suggestion that it would be expedient to levy the duty by the cubic content, in lieu of following the established system by tale, thereby levying a heavier duty on deals in proportion to timber, with a view to encourage the home sawyers, call for some observations from those concerned in the saw-milling business, and show the inexpediency as well as injustice of such a measure. Those persons who have even converted square timber into deals, though they may have been led to make the trial, from the accidental very low price of timber, have uniformly found the results to be most unsatisfactory, and for the following reasons.

Encl. in No. 3.

First, the great loss which necessarily arises in the cubic contents, produced from the four slabs taken off, the occasional crookedness of the timber, the sawkerf and the laying open of rots, hitherto not suspected, in the timber. The deals so sawn scarcely ever rise above second quality, from the prime part of the wood being left in the forest in the form of chips, by the persons employed in squaring up the timber, from those deals being necessarily cut at no great distance from the heart, and hence liable to rents, shakes, and small knots, and from the impossibility, even in the largest timber, without great loss, (in an article already charged with duty, freight, and expenses,) of so cutting it, with reference to the grain of the wood, as to produce a deal or board with the least possible tendency to warp, a matter of the utmost importance to the joiner. In confirmation of the above, it may be stated, that in the United States no square timber is ever got out, except when it is required for a frame, or building purposes. That by converting the deal or board from the round log, the cut most advantageous can be taken, the outside generally affording what is called clear stuff, and of more than double the value of the cuts near the heart; in case of hollow butted logs, the outside rim is often converted into clap-boards, by wedge-like cuts from the circumference towards the centre, or being cut down, as is termed, alive; the rotten in the centre is cut out, and every available offal is made into boards, shingles, or laths, their suiting all markets, whether home or foreign.

When, in 1821, the deal and timber duties were established, colonial and foreign deals were made subject to duty by tale of 120 pieces, the length being from 8-16 and 16-21, at 2*l.* and 2*l.* 10*s.* respectively, without regard being had to the breadth, thereby greatly simplifying the mode of keeping the accounts; this was done, however, principally with the view of enabling the British North American deal merchants to enter into competition with those of Sweden and Norway, who from the nearness of the British market would have enjoyed its exclusive supply had not the same duty been levied on those deals most commonly of 12 feet long and 9 inches wide, as upon the generally longer and wider ones of the former countries. By this arrangement, the building of saw-mills was much encouraged in Canada and New Brunswick, where persons of any description, from the great capitalist to the poor farmer who owned a small mill site; the former erecting extensive works either driven by steam or water, and the latter expending his limited means in the building a small mill, both affording occupation for the inhabitant of the country in hauling out saw-logs from their farms at a season of the year when they would otherwise have been without work, and unattended by that dissipation of which those who occupy camps in the woods, at a distance from home, in getting out square timber, are sometimes, though perhaps unjustly, accused.

It is trusted that whatever may be the alteration of the rate of duty imposed by Parliament, that no disturbance will take place in the mode of collecting it.