

1873.

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TORONTO.

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WILL BE

FULLY ASSORTED

EARLY IN FEBRUARY.

THE MONETARY TIMES,
AND TRADE REVIEW.

TORONTO, CAN. FRIDAY, FEB. 28, 1873.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

If political geography has any meaning, Prince Edward Island is destined to become a province of the Canadian Confederation. It lies ensconced in a recess of the Gulf of St. Lawrence; almost embraced by the outer Cape of Cape Breton and the eastern shore of New Brunswick. Too small to grow into a separate independent state, its possession by a foreign country would be a source of the greatest annoyance, and even of danger to the Dominion. It stands in a position to command the great natural gateway of Canada. When France ceded Nova Scotia, in 1713, to England, she held with firm tenacity to Cape Breton; believing, that if that island also fell into the hands of the English, Canada would cease to be tenable by the French crown. But if Cape Breton holds the keys of the St. Lawrence, this office may be said to belong, in a more direct manner, to Prince Edward Island. Without it, our Confederation would be incomplete; nor as an independent nation, into which it must one day grow, would it be secure, on that element, where, if we may judge by the rapid development of our commercial marine, the principal strength of this new nation may one day lie.

We are glad to hear, for its sake as well as ours, that this Island has taken a step looking to an union with Canada. Delegates have come from thence to Ottawa to open the question anew. Prince Edward Island was represented in the Quebec conference, at which the basis of union was laid down.

Her delegates were apparently consenting parties; and it was not till after their return home that, one of them, Attorney General Palmer, astonished all who had watched his course on the question of union, by opposing the scheme which it was thought the Island had, through him, sanctioned. His colleague, a member of the other political party, never ceased to advocate the union while he lived. Mr. Pope, too, did what he could to bring it about. Some of the early advocates of union were sacrificed to a hostile feeling that pervaded the constituencies. Mr. Palmer had read the indications of discontent; and beat a retreat in time to save himself. But self-sacrifice is sometimes a duty of patriotism; and, it may have been so in this case. It is believed that a different feeling has gradually crept over the Island; and, that the time when it will link its destiny with ours is not far distant. It would be difficult to see what other destiny there is in store for it. To stand alone is now, and forever will be, impossible. To remain an isolated colony forever, is a dream too wild for the sober realities of actual life. The future of the Island, quite as much as ours, requires its union with Canada.

It is not the extent of the Island—for that is small, and we have more land than we can till for many generations—it is not the richness of its soil—though that is great—that renders the acquisition of this island desirable and necessary, on the one side and on the other. If it were a barren rock, fit only for a fishing station, its position would still give it great importance. So far as the area is concerned, it is no matter of concern to Canada to add 2,134 square miles to a territory already larger than that of the United States, and nearly as large as Europe. An addition of a million of acres or so of arable land, counting out the waste, is of no consequence to us; at best, would only be worth as many dollars, if its situation were somewhere else. If we want fisheries, we have got them in abundance, without acquiring this Island. But the position of the Island is unsafe for isolation; safe only in a union with the neighbouring territory, to which it geographically belongs. That the soil is rich, is an advantage that must always accrue to the settlers. These settlers, to say the truth, have been most unfortunately placed. Nearly the whole soil of North America, when it became the appendage of European crowns, was granted to favorites and courtiers with a prodigality that often showed the discoverers unworthy of it. The art of making fortunes by honourable commerce had scarcely been learnt, when the practice of trading in large sections of a continent, and in the blood of

the natives, came into vogue. It was the fate of this Island to be granted away by lottery one night—dismal night for the Island—and the infamous act was almost done in the name of religion. The lucky winners were required to be animated with a zeal for the spread of the protestant religion; and it was a condition of the prize, that these gamblers should settle the lands they won by foreign protestants. Of course, the privileged gamblers failed to fulfil the condition, but they held the land. Escheats were talked of; but, the talk did not injure men against whom the threat was not enforced. The curse of a leasehold tenure settled on the Island, blighting the fairest prospects of its inhabitants. At one time, there were nearly, or quite, 5,000 leaseholders; farmers divorced from the soil they cultivated, labouring for absentees, the legal successors of lucky gamblers. Instead of making property the foundation of society, which should be the first aim of the legislator, as far as in him lies, in all new countries, the very condition of existence implied poverty in this Island.

To get rid of the incubus of the leasehold system in a new country, where it is an anomaly and an anachronism, was the perpetual wish of the islanders; and when proposals of a union with Canada were made, they were based on the abolition of this hideous system. Something, the Government of the Province has recently done, we believe, to shake itself clear of this evil. But much yet remains to be accomplished. If this could be effectually done, and at once, the population of the Island, now less than 100,000, (in 1871 it was 94,021), would, under the new union, soon double or even quadruple; and the revenue, from \$395,473, would rise to a million; while every branch of industry would feel the benefit of the general prosperity.

A NEW FINANCE MINISTER.

A change of Finance Ministers is a political event that only ranks second in importance—regarded with reference to its bearing on the business interests of the country—to that of a change of government. In the present instance the interest that would in any case attach to such a change is very much enhanced by the fact that the retiring Minister is Sir Francis Hincks, who, more than any previous incumbent of the place, may be said to have “magnified his office,” and to have left his mark upon the fiscal legislation of the Dominion. His management of the Finance Department has been vigorous, painstaking, and thorough. Several of his measures evince originality, and all of them display