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Copy of a DESPATCH from Governor-General the Right Hon. the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine to Earl Grey.

Government House, Montreal,
June 15, 1848.

My Lord, (*Received July* 6, 1848.)

A rumour has reached this province that the measure for the amendment of the Navigation Laws, the introduction of which has been hailed with such unanimous acclamations here, may yet be lost in its progress through Parliament. It is my duty to represent to your Lordship that this report has produced a very painful feeling. The Canadian farmer is a supplicant at present to the Imperial Legislature, not for favour, but for justice; and strong as is his affection for the mother country and her institutions, he cannot reconcile it to his sense of right, that after being deprived of all protection for his produce in her markets, he should be subjected to a hostile discriminating duty in the guise of a law for the protection of navigation.

2. That the British shipowner should be unwilling to permit foreigners to share the trade of the St. Lawrence, is not unnatural; but there is too much reason to fear, that if the present system be persevered in, the bulk of the produce of Canada will find its way to New York and Portland, where even under existing laws it may be shipped to England indifferently in American or British bottoms. I shall not insist on the manifold inconveniences and hazards to which such a state of things would inevitably lead. It is enough for the present purpose to observe, that it would render the monopoly promised to the British shipowner illusory.

3. On the other hand, if the natural and acquired advantages of the navigation of the St. Lawrence were to receive their full development under a system of low freights and charges produced by the removal of restriction, it is probable that not only the produce of Canada, but a large portion of that of the Western States of the Union will find its way to Quebec and Montreal. Of this vast and increasing trade, it is hardly possible to doubt that British shipping, with the aid of long established commercial connection, will engross a considerable share.

4. I cannot employ language which is too forcible in representing to your Lordship the anxiety which I feel, conscious as I am of the responsibility attaching to the high trust which Her Majesty has confided to me, that the liberal policy of Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the Navigation Laws, should receive the sanction of Parliament. The people of Canada are animated with the best dispositions towards England; they are satisfied that the constitution of their forefathers, of which they now clearly see that it is the intention of the Imperial Government that they shall enjoy without qualification or reserve the full privileges, affords them at least as large a measure of substantial liberty and social happiness as any form of Government which the wit or ingenuity of man has devised. I am confident that if the wise and generous policy lately adopted towards Canada, is persevered in, the connexion between this province and the mother country may yet be rendered profitable to both in a far greater degree than has been the case heretofore. I should deeply grieve, therefore, if in an attempt which must, I am disposed to believe, in so far as the Saint Lawrence is concerned, prove futile, to secure a monopoly for a useful and exemplary class of our fellow-subjects, provisions were suffered to remain on the British statute book which would seem to bring the material interests of the colonists and the promptings of duty and affection into opposition.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) ELGIN AND KINCARDINE.

The Right Hon. the Earl Grey,
&c. &c. &c.