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THE FREE PRESS.

VOL. I.] MONTREAL, THURSDAY, 3d APRIL, 1823. [No. 24.

— *Graviorem amissa dolorem*
Quam necdum quaesita, movent. CLAUDIAN.

If wealth and liberty have once been our's,
 'T is worse to lose, than never to have had them.

Intending to take up the questions both of the anti-commercial spirit that has been imputed to the Canadians, and that whether commerce ought or ought not to be an object of the first consideration in these provinces, I inserted in No. 18 a letter relative hereto which had appeared in the Canadian Spectator; and in order to keep the object in view, and enable me in a future number, to enlarge upon it, with more data before my readers, I now copy a second letter of the same writer from the same paper.

MR. EDITOR,

In my last communication which you was kind enough to insert in your useful and interesting paper, I alluded to the injurious consequence to this province from the want of the fur-trade; even as it was before the junction of the two companies. To give you and your readers an idea of the injury to the provinces that the loss of the fur-trade has produced, I have made a hasty, but, I believe a pretty correct, statement of its value. If incorrect, the error will be found to be against the provinces, and I will leave the commercial unionists to say, whether the movers of the union-bill have not gained sufficiently by that law, without giving them an opportunity of seizing upon some other parts of our exports in the same manner.

In comparing the exports of furs for several years back, I find that of the year 1813 to come nearest to an average: the imports solely for that trade, the year preceeding, I shall state from the best information I have been able to collect.

Value of exports by custom-house returns at Quebec, amount in London	£	s.	d.
	101,995	15	7
Imports by the North West Company in 1812, for these returns	22,000.		
Imports by other individuals for the supply of posts not depending on that concern	5,000		
	<hr/>	27,000	0 0

In our favour with England.

£ 74,995 15 7

Value of exports to the United States,
notwithstanding the war with that
country 25,864 19 4

Import of tobacco brought in the
—year before

1,000	£	s.	d.
	24,864	19	4

Making the sum of

£ 99,860 5 *

Sterling more of exports than imports, which was about one fifth of the value of the imports for the two provinces and the adjoining States.

The total amount of outfits in 1812, for the returns of 1813, I shall compute at

£ 150,000 0 0

From which deduct value of exports

from England £ 27,000

And from the States

1,000

	28,000	0	0

Leaves the sum of

£ 122,000 0 *

Expended in this and the Upper province, for articles required for that trade, transportation, provisions, liquors, (high wines) clerks, salaries, &c.

Another injury that the country has sustained is the dependence that we are now phased (in) for these articles, which are so essentially necessary for our winter-comfort, on England, and the United States, to the amount of nearly £15,000.

Can it be said from this exposé, that such an important part of our exports could be of no consequence, as it was in the hands of an opponent company? but will you not admit that £99,000, and more, which the individuals had to draw from England to meet the expenses required and expended in this country, was not a help to others in different branches of trade? Besides this, will it not be admitted, that the persons concerned in the present furtrade can have no wish to see this province improve, but the contrary? It is evident that as long as the Lower province remains in a state of wilderness, the better will be that trade; the wild animals will never come near an habitation; and from this I must infer in part, the opposition that our house of Assembly has (have) met in all her (their) proposed improvements. I can not, and will not, believe, that it was the intention of government to unite the provinces, but that it was the intention of self-interested men. I have no doubt that Lord Londonderry's expression, "that the government had no interest (concern) in the proposed measure, is evident proof of it. I would now ask the movers of this union-bill, will you

* There are numerical errors in the original here, which I have corrected.

give up your privilege of the fur-trade, if all parties join you in demanding the union, as you proposed it, with all its infamous appendages? Do you think they would, Mr. Editor? I doubt it their avidity for money is above patriotism. Let the mercantile unionists weigh these facts in their minds, and the injury they, as well as the country, have sustained by the furtrade law, and see whether they are not taking a wrong part, as in this case I consider the sanction of the one, to be also that of the other; being moved and brought by the same persons. This act will shew the people on the other side of the Atlantic, the pusillanimity of our unionists who are always ready to swallow every thing that is proposed from a certain quarter.

I hope while our legislators are taking the Canadian trade bill into consideration, that they will use their influence to have that disgraceful law repealed. The fur-trade before the conquest of the country was free and should be so still, and ought to belong to its inhabitants, where the profits would be employed in making improvements, instead of being spent abroad. It is to that free trade that we are indebted to (for) the numerous scientific discoveries that have been made in this country.

You's till another moment

ANTI-COMMERCIAL.

Though the above writer is not clear in all he says, and is mistaken in one or two instances, particularly where he considers the balance arising from the fur-trade in favour of this country as being all expended in it, (in which, indeed, he contradicts himself, when he speaks of the profits arising from it being spent abroad;) yet his general views of the injurious tendency of the fur-trade law, with respect both to this country, and the traders who resort hither, as well as of the perfectly selfish and interested motives upon which the proposers of the Union-bill, and the proposers of the fur-trade-bill, whom he properly identifies as one and the same set, have always acted; are consonant with these I entertain, and mean to enlarge on, when opportunity permits.

L. L. M.

REMARKS ON THE POST-OFFICE ABUSES, AND REVENUE

(Continued.)

The third mode, namely, to petition the Imperial parliament to make the necessary alterations in the statutes relative to the post-office, would, undoubtedly, not only be the most respectful, but also the most advisable, (for it would not destroy the abstract right of effecting those alterations, which, if need be, I contend, exists in the provincial government, no more than petitioning the Imperial parliament to preserve our constitution inviolate, would affect the right we have to deny the power of

that parliament to take away that constitution,) were it not for the long delay that must necessarily attend such a proceeding, as well as the total uncertainty of its final success: a delay and uncertainty which are wholly incompatible with the onerous existence of the abuses that are daily felt by individuals, and the loss of money that is thus wrung from every class of the community here, and sent home to pay pensioners and placemen with whom we have nothing to do.

Upon the whole therefore, the second suggestion, namely, the establishment of a concurrent provincial post, is that which seems to me, most politically advisable to be followed, as well as most likely to produce an early and decisive remedy of the grievances to which I have called the attentions of the public, and of the legislature

The subject is not yet exhausted. The anomaly of the existence in a country having a legislature of its own, of a privilege that is intended for the sole benefit of the revenue in another; and a power that has been exercised with capricious despotism; is a circumstance that must strike every one with its dangerous tendency; particularly as that privilege, and that power, as well as the persons exercising them, can not be questioned, altered, controuled, or punished, in case of malversation and abuse, by any authority here; for the governor himself has no power to remove or change, even a letter-carrier.

My private complaints of the misconduct of the deputy-post-master-general, and his agents, are before the public; and every day adds to my knowledge of the arbitrary and unprincipled mode in which he exercises his deputed power; farther instances of which I adduce in a note.* Is such a man, or

* *The letter which I mentioned in No. 79 of the Scribbler, as having been opened at the Quebec post office, was lamely excused as having been opened under pretence that, should there have been any bank notes in it, they might have returned them to the right owner. Now I tell them that I know that Mr. Cowan was the person who opened the letter, and the real cause why he did so, and Mr. Sutherland himself took a copy of it, which he now holds. Other letters are missing from the Quebec post-office, both communications from correspondents, and letters of business; and one or two I have received that, having been originally sealed with wafers, have been opened and sealed again with wax, with the impression of a quarter dollar; which letters, my correspondents inform me, had nothing but the wafer in them when put into the post-office. Citizens of Quebec! you know enough of me to know that my words, are the words of truth, and will pass current where the oaths of others particularly of such men as Mr. Sutherland (whereby hangs a tale which*

those of his satellites who are willing to obey his dictates to have the power of controuling the press, of prying into family and commercial secrets, with impunity. for it must be remembered that, as before said, the post-office acts, as they now stand, give no power to the public, however much they may suffer by their acts, to prosecute them for them. The governor has no legal controul over them; the governor can not remove, or punish them; and who will say that the tardy, inefficient, and circuitous mode of making representations thro' the governor, to the government at home, or to the post-master-general in England, is a proper remedy for such abuses — Whilst those representations are on the way, or being taken into consideration, the abuse is going on, increasing, growing worse and worse; and I perceive that I am not the only editor that has to complain

The provincial parliament is now closed; therefore no legislative measures can be pursued; but I sincerely hope the question will be considered, in all its bearings, before the next session; and that it will be taken up then, not as a matter of private grievance and oppression (in which I have probably placed it in too prominent a point of view, for every one gives more weight to his own concerns than to others,) but as one essentially affecting the rights and interests of the whole community, the liberty of the press, and the revenue of the country.

In the mean time, however, I throw out the hint whether the provincial laws relative to the regulations of *la poste*, may not enable a public spirited body to establish a private communication for the conveyance of letters and papers throughout Canada, for hire; which would answer the purposes of the measure I have recommended, namely a *provincial post*; and I

will probably be told at the next criminal court) will not be believed. I ask you, ought you, or any one, ever again to entrust a letter in such hands?

Another instance of undistinguishing and shameful conduct, connected with the post-office department, is this I have already publicly denounced, Horace Dickenson, the proprietor of the mail stage, between Kingston and Montreal, as one of Mr. Sutherland's cowardly slaves. Not long ago, a trunk, directed to a gentleman at Kingston, was taken to the stage-house, and refused to be forwarded, because it happened to be brought there by the man who is in the habit of distributing the Scribbler.— Next day the person who sent it, went to remonstrate on the subject, and was told that it should not go forward at all, unless it was opened and searched to see if there were any Scribbles in it! Ought not such a "cullionly knave," to be exposed, hooted at, and deprived of every honest man's countenance and custom?

am confident that the acts of parliament by which Mr. Sutherland may suppose he has power to prosecute those who do convey letters by any other means than the government post-office, will not be found efficient to enable him to succeed in such prosecutions, should he be so ill-advised as to institute them.

Before I quit the subject, although I am sensible I have extended it to rather an immoderate length, I would call attention too to the power which, according to the present system, one individual at Quebec has, totally to prohibit the receipt or circulation of any American papers in Canada; it is of course an extreme case to put, but as it is in his power to do so as much to all papers, as he has to the Scribbler, I am authorised to suppose it. Would the editors of the American papers sit down quietly with their loss, and allow the British deputy-post master, to curtail them of so far a portion of their profits? Upon a rough calculation, formed on the best data I have, I estimate the annual sum drawn from the British provinces for papers and periodical publications (all equally liable to the despotic veto of one man,) in the United States at 42,000 dollars: (in which I have included my own two at 3,000.) If a general sweeping act of parliament were made to prohibit the importation of such commodities, for in this place we must view them in the light of an article of traffic, the United States could not complain; it would be an internal regulation with which they would have no right to interfere; and all they could do, would be to devise some countervailing measure to cripple or prohibit the importation from England of periodical works.— But, if it be merely the act of an individual, I conceive they would have full right to remonstrate against it, & require its reform. Now the question arises, if such a general interdiction of all American papers as I have supposed, would give them that right, does not, upon a parity of reasoning, the individual interdiction of one give the same right, if that one should think it advisable to apply to the Executive government of America on the subject? *Sed verbum non amplius addam.* L. L. M.

The sessions of the provincial parliaments in both provinces, being now closed; I purpose giving a general review of that of Lower Canada; a detail of what has been done, and what has not been done and some remarks upon the events and circumstances attending the session, as they come under retrospect.— In the mean time, the debates in the House of Assembly of Upper Canada, on the question of the union, being remarkably interesting in their bearing and relation towards the inhabitants, interests, and prospects of the Lower province, I proceed to

make some occasional extracts from them, which I consider as being either particularly deserving of permanent record, or of public annalsadversion.

In No. 19 I remarked upon the mode in which the House there had got rid of the motion to appoint a reporter; considering that the plan stated to have been adopted, was "nugatory, deceptive, and destructive of its professed object." I do not know the exact details of that plan; but I can not but candidly confess that its visible effects in the detailed, and generally well reported, debates of the House, that are published in the Upper Canada papers, are very different from what I had expected; and that it has therefore answered the purpose as well as, or better than, the appointment of an official reporter would have done. Thus much in justice, and in retraction of my opinion.

In justice too to Col Nichol, I can not avoid giving the close of one of his speeches; which displays sentiments of a free and independent spirit which it were desirable were oftener to be found in the deeds, as well as in the mouths, of the unionist-party.

"To conclude, he implored the house to weigh well the consequences of the vote they were about to pronounce on this important question, to divest themselves of all selfish feelings, to consider it merely with reference to the *political connection between Canada and the parent state*, and to the constitutional rights of its inhabitants; in so doing, he was satisfied they must vote for the union—an union of the provinces, upon constitutional principles, preserving unimpaired the provisions of the 31st Geo. III by which the rights of each province were protected—was the only measure by which, he conceived, Upper Canada could be freed from galling and degrading dependence upon Lower Canada, and by which their constituents could retain the important right of raising and appropriating their own money. Let not the House on this occasion be misled by what was called the favourable operation of the trade-act, viz: the certainty of revenue from Lower Canada, to yield up a most important privilege. *Money in comparison with constitutional rights, was a dross*; and he hoped that the House would not, on this occasion, barter their liberty for a mess of pottage, or sacrifice the independence of the province for filthy lucre."

A kind of bird's eye view into futurity was likewise given by that gentleman and some others, which so plainly hints at the supposed necessity that must arise for the political independence, as a sovereign state or states, of both Upper and Lower Canada, that it may be well for ministry at home to perceive the leaven that is working in the minds of both unionists and anti-unionists, and adopt their measures accordingly; so as to bestow, in good season, such boons upon these British North American possessions, as may raise them to the rank they aspire too, without destroying their connection with, allegiance

to, or attachment for, the metropolitan and imperial state, of which they desire to be members, without being its vassals.

Speaking of the Upper province Mr. Nichol said; "Lower Canada is situated between us and the sea, inhabited by a people principally of foreign extraction, and exceedingly jealous and apprehensive of English preponderancy—they were rapidly increasing in numbers and would soon become powerful.— Ought therefore the rise of a foreign state to be viewed without apprehension, which might intercept all communication with the mother country, and force the Upper Canadians, in the event of Great Britain being again engaged in a war similar to the last, to engage in a civil war, in which they might perhaps become tributary to their fellow subjects, or be compelled to join the American States."

Mr. Hagerman declared that "no man who had traced the history of any country could suppose that the Canadas were forever to remain the provinces of an empire. No, although he trusted he should not live to see the day, when the powerful influence and support of the British crown should be withdrawn from this favoured part of His Majesty's dominions, yet he could not disguise from himself that the day must come when the connection would be dissolved, and when that day did arrive, unless Upper Canada was to remain a colony of the now sister province, they must be found united in feeling and sentiment, as well as in interest. There was now as distinct a difference between the people of the two provinces, as there was between the people of Lower Canada, and those of the United States. To remove this distinction, the only effectual way, he conceived, was to resort to an Union, which would gradually remove the differences which now existed, and give us strength to defend and support ourselves.

(To be continued.)

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