

The Examiner.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY, WHEN FREEBORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC, MAY SPEAK FREE."—EURIPIDES.

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CHARLOTTETOWN, P. E. ISLAND, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1848.

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THE EXAMINER.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1848.

THE BRITISH AMERICAN COLONIES.

The following extraordinary communication appears in the *London Daily News* of the 25th October:

"The following private letter from an intelligent and loyal Colonist, in the neighbourhood of Miramichi (New Brunswick) has been obligingly communicated to us. The writer, we are assured, is a man the sobriety of whose judgment may be relied upon.

"Miramichi, Oct. 7.

"A great change has come over the spirit of our colony within the last twelve months. I can safely say that it is now nearly ripe for annexation to the United States. This may startle you; but it is not less true than strange. You will see no trace of this in our newspapers, a wholesome fear of going too far still operating as a check upon them; but the question is daily and hourly discussed among all classes, is regularly debated in the clubs, and advocated by men of wealth and standing everywhere. A variety of causes have combined to bring about this state of feeling. In the first place, the reduction of the duty on Baltic timber, however advantageous to England, has completely destroyed our timber trade, and left us without an export. The threatened abrogation of the navigation laws closed most of our ship-yards, and effectually checked that branch of industry. Free trade is, no doubt, a very good thing for England; but to enjoy it, England must relinquish the idea of possessing colonies, unless they are managed in a manner as widely different as possible from the present system. There can be no question that the West Indies are utterly ruined; and, in another year, we shall be in an equally bankrupt condition. The people here cannot avoid seeing and hearing that the people of the United States are in a most flourishing condition; that there is abundant business of a profitable kind in all the American cities, for all who seek it; and that wages are at least double what are paid, or can possibly be afforded here. Is it strange, then, that thousands without waiting for events, should leave this colony, and proceed 'further west,' as the phrase goes? Since June last about 5000 persons, residents and natives, have left St. John for Boston, thence to scatter over the Union. From all parts of the province they go also. About 4000 emigrants from Ireland have landed during the present season, and of these there are not 400 now remaining, all having 'gone west.'

"You will have noticed that Canada has sent two members of Council, Lafontaine and Sullivan, to Washington, to negotiate a commercial treaty. Mr. Woodward, the member for St. John's, in our Assembly, was sent by the Reform Club, of St. John's, to urge that New Brunswick be put on the same footing as Canada. The Hon. William Young, of Nova Scotia, has gone on a similar errand. The Hon. Mr. Coles of the Executive Council of Prince Edward Island, has been sent to Washington to offer to the Vessels of the United States the privilege of landing on the Island, and thence prosecuting the Fisheries of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, on payment of one dollar per ton for each vessel so employed, to the Island Treasury. These are but first steps toward a connection of a more intimate character, and clearly indicate the change of feeling. The man who two years ago would have dared to propose what Prince Edward Island now offers, would have been flayed alive. If these Colonies succeed in effecting a commercial convention with the United States, and throw open the Fisheries to American citizens, they will be absorbed in the Union much more quickly and readily than was Texas.

"The apathy of the Colonial Office, the utter ignorance which prevails there of the true condition of these Colonies, and the real state of feeling, as also the total indifference of Government to everything which would conduce to benefit British North America, disgust all sensible persons. Downing Street is in Cimmerian darkness, and fancies that because all is quiet, every thing goes well, while these Colonies are silently but surely slipping away from England."

The Hon. Mr. Coles has addressed us the following letter in reference to the statement in the above extract concerning him:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EXAMINER.

SIR—

In the *London Daily News* of the 25th ult., it is stated on the authority of a correspondent writing from Mira-

michi, that I was "sent to Washington to offer to the Vessels of the United States the privilege of landing on this Island, and thence prosecuting the Fisheries of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, on payment of one dollar per ton on each vessel so employed, to the Island Treasury."

I believe I need not assure you that I was not sent to Washington, nor did I go there on any errand whatever,—the allusion to an embassy is, therefore, pure invention.

While on my way to the United States during the late Summer, I met with several gentlemen of New Brunswick, (fellow travellers) with whom I engaged in a conversation touching the condition and prospects of the British American colonies, under the operation of free trade principles. In the course of this conversation I suggested, that the prosperity of this Island could not fail to be greatly enhanced, if the Americans were allowed to make use of the Fish which are going to waste in our waters—if the coast restrictions were removed, great expense would be saved to the British Government, and the measure might be made a source of profit to the local Treasury, by requiring U. States vessels availing themselves of the privilege, to pay a licence. It is probable that out of this conversation the Miramichi correspondent manufactured his tale for the *Daily News*. I am sure that in my intercourse with the gentlemen alluded to, or with any others during my absence from Charlottetown, nothing fell from me to justify the belief or opinion, that I was officially employed on any business beyond this Island.

I am, Sir, your obedt. Servt.

GEORGE COLES.

Charlottetown, November 16.

In the *Daily News* of the 26th we find a lengthy but well written commentary on the subjects brought under the Editor's notice by his trans-Atlantic correspondent. Although only a small portion of the article is devoted to a consideration of the affairs of this Colony, we doubt not the whole of it will be read with interest:—

"The letter from New Brunswick, which we published yesterday, challenges serious attention. From the way in which it came into our hands, we can only say that its *bona fide* character, and the respectability of the source whence it emanates, are vouched for in a manner that commands our entire belief. The purely historical style adopted by the author leaves us in doubt as to the extent to which he sympathises and coincides in opinion with his fellow colonists. But after all deductions made, there stands the letter, a genuine picture of the actual state of public feeling in New Brunswick, and of the impressions there prevalent respecting the state of public feeling in the sister colonies of the North American group.

Comparing the statements of this letter with the information we receive from other sources in British North America, we are convinced, that, as a representation of the prevailing temper in New Brunswick, it is literally true; that as a representation of the prevailing temper in the neighbouring provinces it is less exact; but that on the whole it approaches sufficiently near to the truth, to render attention to its warnings, on the part of those upon whom devolves the management of public affairs in this country, urgent and indispensable. To use the writer's own words: 'To enjoy free trade England must relinquish the idea of possessing colonies, unless they are managed in a manner as widely different as possible from the existing system.' The monopoly of the British market for their produce, was a bribe that induced a majority of our West Indian and North American colonists to submit to a system of government always inefficient for good, often grossly oppressive; that bribe being now discontinued, there remains only one means of retaining their allegiance—the adoption of such a system of administration as will make them practically feel they are better off than any change in their relations to the parent state can make them.

"We have said that in so far as public feeling in New Brunswick is concerned, we are convinced that the writer's statements are literally true. Canada and Nova Scotia are looking hopefully forward to the advent of entirely unrestricted commerce, and are urging its acceleration. Canada and Nova Scotia are situated on great highways of trade; population has in them developed itself by a natural process, and has attained

a degree of density which imperatively demands an extension of the sphere of their industrial enterprise. Every part of these provinces is or may easily be brought within reach of some centre of industrial enterprise so situated that it only need to be left to its own exertion to succeed. But the settlement of New Brunswick has in a great measure been accelerated by artificial means. The province is an out-of-the-way corner, to which in the natural course of events only a scattering and backwoods population could yet have reached, either coming northwards from New England or southwards from the gulf and river of St. Lawrence. It was originally settled by emigrant loyalists from the United States driven thither by the pressure of war, not in a speculative search after profit. Its population was prematurely increased by the protection awarded to its timber and ships in the British market. It has been created by our protective system; it would not have been so populous or wealthy but for our protective system; that system being in the process of abolishment, it must shrink back within the limits it could have attained in a natural state of affairs, and re-commence its growth from that point. In these circumstances, nothing more natural than a large emigration from New Brunswick to fields of great natural fertility, and situated on the highways not on the byways of natural spontaneous migration. In these circumstances, nothing more natural than that those who have been enabled by our protective system to attain to a sickly hot-house show of prosperity, should be discontented when the shelter under which they have budded and blossomed is withdrawn. The tradition that the colony was founded as a place of refuge for those who had lost all in the United States on account of their loyalty to the British crown, naturally prompts the thought, 'if we are not to continue to receive payment for the sacrifices our predecessors made, we may as well reconcile ourselves to that flourishing people from whom, in the enthusiasm of their loyalty, they withdrew.' The hankering after annexation to the United States, which is beginning to show itself in New Brunswick, does not begin with a liberal party like the liberal parties in Canada and Nova Scotia, to whom such a leaning has been sometimes imputed, but with the very class which was ultra-loyal so long as its loyalty was paid for by a monopoly of the British market for their produce. We do not blame them for their change of sentiment—it is natural in those who are guided more by impulse than reflection. But we see clearly the erroneous nature of their calculations. Incorporation with the United States would not make St. John a Boston, nor arrest the tendency of the population to continue to migrate westward, until the naturally more fertile and accessible regions of the American continent become so filled up, that New Brunswick becomes the most eligible field on it for colonisation. The disposition to transfer their allegiance from Great Britain to the United States, which has its growth in the effects of the transition from restricted to free trade, will pass away, unless misgovernment strengthen and perpetuate it.

"With regard to the rest of our North American provinces, we are assured that no such spirit of wavering allegiance at this moment exists in any of them; but we can see influences at work, which, unless these colonies are well and wisely governed, may ere long generate such a spirit in all of them.

"In Prince Edward Island this danger has its source in economical causes. The letter to which we have been adverting, states that a member of the executive council of that island has proceeded to Washington to endeavour to make arrangements for attracting American citizens and capital to prosecute their coast fisheries. 'The man who, two years ago, would have dared to propose what Prince Edward Island now offers, would have been flayed alive.' What has caused this change of sentiment? The conviction of the islanders that they have not themselves sufficient capital to prosecute the fisheries with advantage, and their failure to attract it from England. What has incapacitated them to accumulate such capital by their own exertions or to procure it from England? The impediments opposed to the profitable exertion of industry—the state of vassalage and serfdom in which the colonists are kept by the land tenures introduced and maintained there by the imperial government. When the island was originally acquired by this country it was parcelled out among some seventeen proprietors—favourites or tools of the ministers of the day—and is still held by their absentee heirs. None of these have made any great exertions to develop the resources of the colony, and most of them have made none at all. They are rank dogs in the manger, who cannot turn what they have got to profitable account, and will not allow others to do so. And not only is their influence felt as an upas tree, blasting the industry beneath its shade, but as a state engine to uphold the government