

Communications.

OUR NORTH AMERICAN FISHERIES.

Nearly eight years have now elapsed since *Mercator*, through the medium of the *Colonial Magazine*, endeavoured to awaken his fellow countrymen—but more especially the Colonial Officials in Downing Street—to the importance of our North American Fisheries. At that period, our information was obtained in some measure from statistical data, and parties practically acquainted with, and deeply interested in that important branch of British and Colonial industry. Now we can speak from personal observation, and boldly grapple the question, not as theorists or mere observers, but as practical workers and an interested party.

In 1845 we left our Fatherland to take the management of a large Fishing Establishment, and have now resided upwards of seven years in the District of Gaspé. This District includes the Counties of Bonaventure and Gaspé, presenting a sea-board of about 300 miles, that is from Restigouche at the head of the Bay Chaleurs to Cape Chat in the river St. Lawrence, with a population according to the last Census, of about 22,000 souls, two thirds of whom, if not three fourths, depend mainly on the Fisheries as a means of subsistence. We are therefore deeply, and vitally interested in the Fishery question, which has roused a portion of the Press of the United States to a state of excitement bordering on frenzy.

With no small degree of interest have we perused that passage in the speech of our Most Gracious Sovereign, wherein allusion is made to the difficulties which have arisen. The conclusion is as follows:—“The friendly spirit in which the question has been treated, induces me to hope that the ultimate result may be a mutually beneficial extension and improvement of our Commercial Intercourse with that great Republic.” Earl Donoughmore as the mover of the address in the House of Lords, after entering into some important details, is reported by the *Times* to have concluded that portion of his speech with the following remarks:—“that there was reason now to hope that the Government of the United States was disposed to negotiate cordially on the point, and that great and important commercial advantages would be gained to our North American Colonies, by the settlement of the question.” There is a something in both these quotations which we fear bodes no good to our Fisheries. For years past, we, the North American Colonists, have complained that our rights were invaded, but to no purpose. Our repeated applications for protection, were treated with contempt. We use the word contempt advisedly, being born out in our assertions by the very words of her Majesty, who is made to say “that frequent and well founded complaints on the part of the North American Colonies &c.” Mark, well founded! If well founded, why were they not attended to; why were we left unprotected; why were we not maintained in our just rights? Because it has been the fashion in the Colonial Office to neglect the best interests of those whose welfare they were appointed to watch over. Whig and Tory Administration have been alike. Did not the present Premier, when Colonial Minister in 1845, concede to the Americans the right of fishing in the Bay of Fundy, and was he not on the point of making further concessions, but for the timely remonstrance of parties at home? Old grievances are not here repeated, with the view of damaging the fair fame of the Earl of Derby, or from political feeling, but for the purpose of proving our oft repeated assertions in the *Colonial Magazine*, that the present constitution of the Colonial Office, is prejudicial to the best interests of our vast Colonial Possessions; not only prejudicial, but eminently and practically adverse to our welfare and prosperity. We then spoke as an interested party, because we were connected with the Colonial Trade—Now we speak as Colonists, having pitched our tent on the shores of British North America, as Canadians.

If, however, the Earl of Derby when entrusted with the Colonial Portfolio, committed an error in the case above alluded to; his recent conduct as regards the Fisheries entitle him to the warm and grateful thanks of all British North America. He has done his duty nobly. All that we now ask, is a continuation of the protection so opportunely afforded us. Let no concessions be made to Americans or others, and he will ever be looked upon as the greatest benefactor we have had among British Statesmen.

We are ignorant of the nature of the negotiations now pending between the two Governments, relative to this important question; but we trust that our Ministers will insist on a rigid adherence to the strict interpretation of the Treaty. That compact was ratified by the Mother Country, on behalf and for the benefit of her colonial subjects. It gave us certain rights and privileges, which ought to be considered as sacred as those given to any member of Her Majesty's Government, to enjoy the Paternal Estates by virtue of his Title Deeds.

Free Trade we are told by the American Journals, is the great boon to be offered for unrestricted access to our fishing grounds. Give us Free Trade in its most extended and unfettered shape, and we in return will give you the free navigation of all our inland waters, of our noble St. Lawrence, which we consider will not only be an equivalent but

far more important to the commerce of the United States, than the advantages these Colonies can derive from Free Trade. Free Trade in exchange for our Fisheries would be tantamount to selling our birth-rights for a mess of pottage.

We protest against any concessions being made as regards our Fisheries not only as Colonists but as Englishmen. Our isolation in this oasis, our absence from the land of our birth, has not weakened our affection for Old England, or made us feel less interested in the national welfare. We glory in her proud name of Ocean Queen. The hour that gave us birth saw her mistress of the sea, and we trust we shall not live to see her shorn of any of her dearly purchased laurels. But we unhesitatingly affirm that the conceding to Foreigners the right to fish in our Bays, and along our shores, would be a great national calamity, and the first step towards the ultimate loss of our Ocean supremacy. There is not a finer nursery for seamen than the Fisheries, home or colonial. Any decrease in their prosecution must therefore reduce the number of British Seamen, and tend to cripple our right arm. On the other hand any concession made to the United States will add to their Maritime resources. What but the supineness of the Home Government has caused such an increase in the American fishing fleet which prowls upon our shores each succeeding summer. Enforce the strict observance of the Treaty, and in less than three years their number will decrease one third at least. In a political point of view, England has therefore a direct interest in insisting upon and maintaining the present state of things. In a commercial one, she has much to lose, without even the shadow of an equivalent. Let the reader cast his eye on the map of British North America. You have the Colony of Newfoundland in the first place, with a population of 96,500 souls, wholly dependant on the fisheries for their support, whilst their already too scanty means of subsistence, and you spread desolation throughout the length and breadth of the Island; a few years will suffice to depopulate it more effectively than by cholera or any other pestilence. Cripple the resources of Newfoundland, and you will inflict a direct and lasting injury on all the Sister Colonies. Ask the Merchants of Halifax if they would suffer; look at the exports of Flour, Pork, and Lumber from Canada; Lumber from New-Brunswick, Oats, Peas, Potatoes, &c., from all parts, and then consider how we should stand affected. Turn from Newfoundland to the Island of Grand Manan in the Bay of Fundy—follow the Southern shores of New Brunswick—thence round Nova Scotia and Cape Breton—the Eastern Coast of New Brunswick, the Bay Chaleurs, Gaspé and the South-shore of the St. Lawrence as far as Kamouraska—Prince Edward and the Magdalen Islands—the coast of Labrador—mark the numerous Bays and Inlets—consider this vast seaboard, think of a population along the entire coast, mainly depending on the ocean for its means of subsistence, and then reflect on the injury England must inevitably sustain if we are deprived of our only resource. This is not all, Upper Canada is as deeply interested in the prosperity of the Fisheries as ourselves. The fishermen along the entire line of Coast, described above, are her best customers, this District alone, consumes at least £25,000 to £30,000 of Upper Canadian Produce yearly. Look at the vast amount of Capital invested, the number of ships engaged in the import and export trade, Home, Foreign, Colonial, Coastways. The Consumption of British manufactures, of West India produce. Sum all these up, and then consider what England has at stake. This is no trifling question, either for us or the Mother Country. 'Tis one of life or death, of ruin or prosperity.

No British Colonial Minister has, or ever has had, the most distant idea of the vast importance of our Fisheries, either in a political or commercial point of view. This we admit, is a bold assertion, a sweeping and serious charge against so many talented and eminent British Statesmen. But facts are stubborn things, and we assert that of which their own acts convict them. If aware of their importance, why neglect them? If our oft reiterated complaints were well founded, why turn a deaf ear to them? Why has Foreign aggression been not only allowed, but virtually countenanced? What right we ask, had Lord Derby, in 1845, to concede to the Americans, the right of fishing in the Bay of Fundy, and this, in direct opposition to the remonstrances of the Colonists. The wording of the Treaty is so plain, that any school boy can understand it. We think we have made good our assertions, but if any should presume to tell us that all this has not arisen from ignorance of facts, then we shall have recourse to a far more serious charge.

The Americans themselves admit, that they cannot prosecute the Mackerel Fishery to advantage, if the Treaty is rigidly enforced. Why? Because the vast shoals of that valuable fish, which visit our shores each successive year, enter the Bays to spawn, and keep within three miles of the shore. We have heard it observed by the master of an American Schooner, that the people of the Bay Chaleurs, need not go California for gold, the produce of the deep, was to them an equivalent.

The small Island of Jersey has about 100 sail of Shipping engaged in the North American Fisheries. It is we believe generally considered that the two Firms of Messrs. Robin and Nicolle, afford daily employment to one thousand hands each, besides the immense number of Planters, and others wholly dependant on them; to these add the impor-

tant Firms of De Quetteville, Janvrin, and Le Boutellier and Brothers. Besides some twenty other Houses, either wholly or partially engaged therein. We have no means in this retired spot, of ascertaining the real amount of capital invested, but a rough calculation convinces us, that Jersey alone has upwards of half a million, if not a million of money at stake in these Fisheries.

Let Lord Derby then beware how he trifles with such a question. The Statesmen of the Empire Republic are as crafty as their Merchants, and will strive hard to outcalculate His Lordship. Let no important step be taken in this matter, no definite arrangement be concluded, until the various Colonial Legislatures have been consulted. We have an undoubted right not only to be heard, but no Colonial Minister can be justified in alienating one iota of our patrimony or our privileges without our approbation and consent. 'Tis high time that our Colonial Office should imbibe the spirit of Reform, and that something like justice and plain common sense should regulate its dictums. It is a complete farce to suppose that any man however talented, is competent to rule our vast Colonial Empire. It would require years of close study and practical experience to enable any Minister however apt, or of superior abilities, to become conversant with the history, the wants, capabilities and resources of the mighty whole. This we believe no sensible man will attempt to gain-say. How then can it be otherwise, than that endless blunders are committed, when a Colonial Minister has scarcely time to become thoroughly conversant with the routine of his office, ere he be called upon to resign his Portfolio. As to the stationary gentlemen in the Colonial Office, we once said of them that which we now repeat “that they perform a certain quantity of official duty in the same manner that a horse turns the grindstone of a cider press,” and we may add for the self same reason, because they cannot avoid it. We are considered by them a discontented, troublesome set. Every fresh complaint or new despatch caused additional labour, if only to docket and shelve them, and if the hundreds of just complaints from the various Colonies, which have been shelved, were brought to light and fairly enquired into, a tithe would suffice to cause an impartial jury to find a verdict of guilty, guilty of what we think we hear the ghost of the departed King of the Colonial Office exclaim! of Gross dereliction of duty, of dogged obstinacy, of misrepresentation, of want of judgment, or if preferable in a charitable point of view, of downright stupidity!

What, says Mr. D'Israeli, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his talented and admirable speech on the Budget. He admits that our public departments need reform, that, unlike the mercantile and other interests, they have not advanced and conformed to the spirit of the age! “If,” he says, “we attempt to reform, we have to encounter two of the most formidable obstacles in the world—prejudice and skill. A person who presides over a great department does not like you to interfere, and he has more knowledge of the subject than you have.” The latter observation we differ from in toto. Any well informed mercantile man, engaged in the Fisheries, has a practical knowledge of the subject which can never be acquired by any gentleman in the Colonial Office. We should like to hear Mr. Brooking, or any other noted merchant, interested therein, cross questioning the entire corps of Colonialists on the subject. They would cut but a sorry figure. How then, we ask, is it possible for a Colonial Minister, a mere bird of passage, to Legislate correctly on that of which he has but a theoretical or accidental knowledge. No public department in the world, has more need of radical reform—aye, of reconstruction—than our Colonial. Like the Augean stable, it should be swept clean.

MERCATOR.

New Carlisle, Gaspé, 3rd January, 1853.

PUBLIC MATTERS.

To the Editor of the Gleaner,

Sir—In my introductory letter, I observed some of the great reforms sought after, such as Vote by Ballot, Elective Councils, and Lower Rate of Franchise, and so forth. Now I ask in common reason, what lasting benefits would result to the bulk of the people by these reforms. Should they be obtained, would they lessen the burthen of the poor man, or introduce a better and more healthy state of society, which should be the aim and end of all legislation. I fear not; and much as has been said and written on it, I confess I have seen or heard nothing that for a moment, should weigh with public opinion.

Much as has been said about Ledger influence, and such like, I believe to be more imaginary than real, and much of the servile, crooked, and cringing acts so often met with at elections, nine times out of ten, exist in the parties themselves. I have witnessed many elections, and have seen the influence of the Ledger doing its utmost, yet an independent freeholder voted the way he wished. I would ask no better proof to substantiate my argument, than the noble County of Northumberland, where its independent freeholders have more than once, measured themselves with one of the greatest mercantile houses in the Province, and holding as great an amount of influence as could be held in any County, yet they were shown more than once, that they could not do just as they had a mind to. The days of Liquor influence is fast wearing away; people are beginning to keep more out of debt, and consequently are more independent; and I shall be much mistaken if Liquor at election times, will speedily be as

harmless as a bunch of ballads: and further, it should be remembered, that no merchant is such a fool as to bite his own nose off to spite another, or in other words, to quarrel with a good customer, because he could not drive him as he pleased; and the only good that Vote by Ballot would do, so far as I can see, would be to save Candidates the trouble of making use of that enchanting, soul-stirring word, so often used in their Cards and Speeches, INDEPENDENT FREEHOLDERS, and substitute SKULKING FREEHOLDERS. Besides, there would be much trickery and deception, and no chance left to ascertain the guilty party. If any person will put themselves to the trouble to inform themselves, they will find in the United States, where it has been tried, that it is no uncommon occurrence, to have a much greater number of votes out of the ballot box than exists in the County or State, in a word, I do not like it—it is anti-British.

Next comes Rate payers, or Universal Suffrage; and strong reasons are set forth, that wisdom consists not in riches, and that many a man without a shilling in his pocket, may be possessed of sounder judgment, and more discernment, than he that is possessed of his broad acres and hundreds in store. Whilst I freely admit the above reasoning, that a person may be poor and still have a large amount of wisdom, yet it is unreasonable to expect him to have the same amount of interest in the country as the man possessing his thousands. Forty shillings yearly, with a title constitutes a freeholder under the present franchise, and to say the least of it, he that thinks it not worth his while to possess himself of a forty shilling freehold, to make himself on a par with the man of thousands, is unworthy a voice in the country he resides in, and shows but too plainly, an indifference to its interests; and no Member of Parliament would introduce a measure of this kind, but for political capital, and no honest man would support any change of the kind.

Elective Councils at present, I shall pass over and recur to them hereafter. It may be said if all this be true there are few reforms needed. I answer—yes. Never, perhaps, in any Colony of the British Empire, pretending to enlightenment and civilization, is there so much need of reform or redress of grievances, coming in direct opposition to the interests of the people, and the wellbeing of society, as exists in the Province of New Brunswick; and strange to say, every succeeding Session appears to make things worse instead of better. Now the first question to be asked—what is a Government? Who are they? From whom do they emanate? What are their duties? And whose interests are intrusted to their keeping? I need scarce remind you or your readers that all these emanate from the PEOPLE themselves, and that all the money, commonly called Government money, is the united contribution, and hard earnings of thousands of poor men and women, many of them eking out a scanty living by the sweat of their brow; and every man or woman must know when they purchase a pound of tea, a fig of tobacco, or whatever necessities they may want, that then and there, they pay the duty, it being added to the first cost of the article; and it is most amusing to hear members of Parliament, sometimes when they chose to be eloquent, and wish to bamboozle the public, talk of the people's money, and of themselves, as public Servants, when so few of them act in accordance with what they profess. Now let us test the difference between public and private Servants. A private Servant is supposed before he can expect to hold his place and receive his wages, to earn them faithfully, carry out his employers wishes, and study honestly, what may be his employers, interest; to perform his work in a workmanlike manner: Public Servants with the exception of a few honorable and noble minds to be met with occasionally, act just the reverse, performing their work in a careless, slovenly and unmeaning manner, yet hunt out the best roasts, fix their own salaries, and bid defiance to their employers. Witness the Municipal Act of last winter, published in the *Gleaner*, which you justly styled “a cumbersome piece of machinery,” a kind of mule between the Government and Opposition. Look at its provisions—It is left with the people to take it or leave it, just as they pleased; but before it could be adopted there must be at least two thirds for it. A most wise precaution, after compiling those eighty or ninety sections, with all the provisos attached to them. Surely the Attorney General must have had a hand in it, to bring about that desirable state of society, provided in the Law, that the minority should govern. One vote, or a majority, may return a Member to Parliament to make laws, but it requires two thirds to carry them into effect when made. We should not be surprised shortly to see an Act passed, to provide, and more effectually secure Members seats, when they possess a good paying office. Its provisions something like the following:—And be it enacted, that in no case whatever, shall any member when once elected, be in honor bound to resign his seat, provided always, it suits his convenience and interest, should nine-tenths of his constituents declare they have no confidence in him, to the contrary notwithstanding.

Next: there is the School Act, another of the same stamp: but there is some show of sense in that, as it would be bad policy to force Education on individuals, as it might make them troublesome. So in place of a simple, straightforward compulsory act forcing each County to settle its own affairs, thereby preventing those five-penny, and five pound matters coming before the Legislature, as they do at present, in showers, from all parts of the Province, frequently costing in debate, ten times more than the sums prayed