

COAL TRADE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL.  
50, Townsend-street, Nov. 24, 1832.

SIR, - I beg to offer my public acknowledgments of gratitude to you, for your uniform devotedness to the advocacy of the interests of Ireland, and affording facility of communication through the medium of your widely circulating and respectable journal, to the public, the fullest information on public grievances that press on the community, and also on such remedies as in reason and experience may be honestly suggested by any of the sufferers, so calculated to meliorate the condition of the aggrieved, and remove the cause of complaint. Sir, if what I take leave to submit to you, shall appear to you worthy of a place in your columns, I am sure you will freely give it, for you will perceive that I am only affected in degree in common with every inhabitant in Dublin. The grievance is, that at the Whitehaven colliery the Dublin merchants, manufacturers, &c., are restricted from obtaining coals to carry in their own ships, and compelled to buy from the shipping belonging to a confederacy in Whitehaven, at high prices, for though the merchants, manufacturers &c. in Dublin should freight or purchase as many vessels of their own as would supply their wants, yet, by a combination of the ship owners with the coal owner of Whitehaven, the Dublin merchants, &c. are not allowed the benefit of the economy of carrying their own coals in their own ships, for the coal owner refuses to allow any ship to carry more cargoes of coals to Dublin in a year than another vessel, and insists that every ship shall move in rotation between Dublin and Whitehaven, and will only load them in such order, and will detain the Dublin merchants, &c.'s ships from loading four, five, or six weeks, lying in Whitehaven under expenses, till such ships as are delayed in Dublin to obtain a high price for their coals, shall have returned and reloaded in their rotation with reference to their preceding loading as Dublin coal carrying ships, by which means the Dublin merchants, manufacturers, &c. are shut out from carrying coals from Whitehaven in their own ships, and the carrying trade is entirely engrossed by the shipping of Whitehaven; and under the management of a committee of the ship owners and an agent, the price of Whitehaven coals, in Dublin, is kept up to 16s. per ton, to the public, uniformly, whilst they are being had for 12s. per ton in the public in Belfast, it being free from such restrictions at Whitehaven. For Dublin is the only place subjected to such restrictions. The abhorrence in which England holds such restrictions on trade and commerce in coals, and such refusal to load ships at collieries, and the appointment of agents to bring ships into market in turn, and to keep up the price of coals, is best demonstrated in the following enactment, passed for the prevention of these very grievances which we in Dublin are now suffering:—

English statute 9 Anne, chap 28, s. 1.—“All contracts or agreements between any coal owners, &c. or other persons concerned in the coal trade, or engrossing coals, or restraining any person from freely selling, buying, loading, or unloading, navigating, or disposing of coals, are declared void, and if any person shall keep up, continue, act in, make, enter into, sign, seal, or be knowingly concerned in any such contract or agreement, or shall keep up any office, or place for the management of such contract or agreement, as party to, or knowingly interested in the same, or shall act or officiate therein as clerk, agent, or servant, to the persons contracting, &c., the persons so offending shall forfeit, viz. every coal owner, 100l; every fitter 50l., and every master or owner of a ship, clerk, AGENT, &c. 20l.

Sec. 2. “Every fitter or other person vending coals shall give a certificate to every ship master, every voyage, signed by him, containing the day and year of such loading, the master and ship's name, and quantity and names of the collieries out of which the coals were gotten, and the price paid by the master for every sort of coals, which certificates, upon arrival in the port of London, or other delivering port, shall be registered with the proper officers of customs. Any of the persons refusing to do as directed to forfeit 10l.

Sec 3 “If any lighterman, &c., or other person concerned in the coal trade, shall receive any salary, or reward from any coal owner, fitter, master of a ship, &c., or for the dispatch, delivery, or disposal of coals before any other &c., shall forfeit 50l.

Sec 4 “If any persons, guilty of those offences, shall, within three months after, make discovery of any coal owner, fitter, &c., so as they be convicted, shall be discharged of the penalties, and shall have the same benefit as any other person, by virtue of this act

Sec. 5 “Ships laden with coal, not to lie in bye ports, unless through stress of weather, under penalty of 50l.—This act made perpetual by 1 Geo. I chap. 26.

Further, by the 4 Geo II chap. 30, s. 1.—“It shall not be lawful for any owners of any ship employed in the coal trade or any other persons, to give any directions to any master of such ship, or to any agent employed in the selling of coals, which shall relate to keeping turn in selling or delivering coals in the Thames, and no master or other person having command of such ship, shall obey such orders, or keep such turn as aforesaid, upon pain to forfeit 100l.”

Further, the 13 Geo II chap 15, “To oblige fitters and others, vending and loading ships with coals at Newcastle and the ports adjacent thereto, to deliver such coals to any masters of ships applying for the same.”

These legislative enactments are so clear, full, and expressive of the abhorrence with which the English legislature viewed the perpetrators and actors in the grievances now inflicting on Dublin, that in every line may be read pains and penalties on the coal owners, ship owners, agents, &c., that dare to treat England as Dublin is treated, in obstructing or refusing to load her ships at Whitehaven, or by appointing an agent to bring the ships into the Dublin market in turn, which is no better in principle than if, like the coal owner a Whitehaven, the salesmasters in Smithfield refuse to sell cattle to the butcher only in town, the citizens on going to the meat market should be compelled to buy or clear out meat in stall No. 1, before they go to No. 2, No. 2 whether the meat be good or bad, before 3, &c. which might with equal justice be made to apply to grocery, woollen, or any, or every other business, in all of which it would begot the same evils felt in the coal trade. And will it be said, that what is so criminal in England to do, is no crime in Dublin? Certainly not, for it is only necessary to make the Right Hon. E. G. Stanley acquainted with the grievance and he will have it redressed. Sir, it would be presumptuous in me to offer any opinion on the letter or legal provisions of the articles of the Union, but for the information of your readers I beg to trouble you with the following extracts which in spirit, I would submit, secured to Ireland, and of course to Dublin, that freedom of navigation, commerce and trade, and right of obtaining coals in “all parts and places in the United Kingdom and its dependencies,” for which Dublin contends Article the sixth—“His Majesty's subjects of Great Britain and Ireland shall be entitled to the same privileges, and be on the same footing as to encouragements and bounties on the like articles, being the growth, produce, or manufacture of either country respectively, and generally in respect of trade and navigation in all ports and places in the United Kingdom and its dependencies, &c; and coals, on importation into Ireland from Great Britain, shall be subject to burthens not exceeding those to which they are now subject.” Article the eighth—“And all laws at present in force, in either kingdom, which shall be contrary to any of the provisions which may be enacted by any act for carrying these articles into effect, shall be from and after the Union repealed.” That it was the intention of the legislature to have conferred on Ireland the privilege of freedom of navigation in all ports, &c., and freedom of trade, that is of delivering and of having goods delivered to the Irish shipping, in all ports, &c., and that coals should not be burthened, cannot be doubted, yet, the coal owner of Whitehaven renders the whole abortive—compels the Dublin shipping to lie in that port, as though they were under quarantine, perhaps for four weeks or upwards, before he will deliver coals to them, as he insists on their waiting and keeping turn with the shipping of a confederacy in Whitehaven, which shipping may not arrive at Whitehaven from Dublin for four or five weeks after the Dublin shipping arrive, which is wholly subversive of the freedom of trade and commerce, and of Dublin acting in her coal trade and shipping on that, though true, yet sound maxim, “light profit and quick return make a heavy purse.” I have heard it asked, what good could result from the Right Honourable E. G. S. Stanley having the Newcastle coal act, 11 Geo II. c. 15., extended to all collieries throughout the empire, as the coal-owners need not work their pits, which would, in effect, be to suppose that the spirit of the 6th article of the Union could not be carried into effect, which I will neither suppose nor believe; for as a remedy can be afforded against such a contingency which would be tantamount to besieging Dublin, &c., as if one colliery can so combine, so can all. The British legislature would not be slow in providing a remedy for it, and perhaps, such provision would be the simplest and best remedy to enact in the first instance, which would be found in passing a general mining Act, similar to its provisions to the mining laws of Germany, empowering any one or more persons disposed to engage in the working of mines, to enter into any field, &c., throughout Great Britain, &c., and claim, even contrary to the will of the owner, like canal or road-ways, a limited area of the land, to sink and work the mine, paying a valued sum for the surface, and giving to the proprietor of the soil a portion of the profits of the mines. This Act would enable the people of Dublin to go over to Whitehaven, sink and erect a shaft within 1000 yards of Lord Londedale's, and to supply themselves with White-

haven coal, and would ensure the carrying of the articles of the Union into effect, and might bring combinations to repent of their wickedness. Sir, I fear I have drawn too largely on your generous and patriotic exertions, but as every shilling per ton raised on the coals imported into Dublin amounts to 14 000l. per year, so the prevention of a drainage of even 42,000l. per year is worthy of an effort from Dublin, the fact that Whitehaven, Maryport or Workington coals, for they all bring the same price in Belfast, preceeding in Belfast to the public by retail from the ships, from the 1st May last till the 3d July, at 12s. to 12s. 6d. per ton, (Belfast Mercantile Register), whilst Whitehaven coals in Dublin were uniformly, during that period, kept up to 16s. 6d. per ton by retail, on board every ship in the Liffey, to the public—Dublin Price Current these extraordinary differences in prices between Belfast and Dublin were during a period when there was no duty on coals in either Dublin or Belfast, nor was it then known that the duty of 4s. per ton would be laid on coals here. All this difference whilst the port charges of Dublin do not amount to 8d. per ton on the cargo of coals above Belfast port charges. The almost incredibility of the enormity of the baneful consequences or effects resulting to Dublin from the acts of the confederacy of the ship and coal owners of Whitehaven, in their so strictly restricting our trade and commerce, compelled me to be the more prolix and explanatory in detail, in hopes of making myself fully understood to your readers.

I am, Sir, your most obedient and watchful servant,  
STEPHEN FOX DICKSON

TO THE EDITOR OF THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL.  
Clareville, Outerard, Nov. 25, 1832.

SIR—I have just seen your paper of the 17th November, in which you have copied, from the Galway Free Press, a gross misrepresentation of my conduct in rescuing a man assailed by a mob. As you have contributed to give circulation to the falsehoods of an anonymous slanderer, I request you will publish the following statement, the truth of which I can prove:—

In the first place, I knew nothing of the cause of quarrel between Sullivan (who is not my dog boy) and the people who attacked him, but was called out of my house by a person, who asked me “to come instantly to the gate, and save Sullivan, or he would be killed by some men.” I went out, and found him in the hands of a number of persons (I think ten, at least), who were treating him very ill, some endeavouring to twist his cravat tightly on his neck, whilst others were forcibly taking a gun from him, and striking at him. I desired them to let him go away, and, on their refusal, I certainly did knock some of them down, but it can be proved that I had neither stick or other weapon in my hand. As for the gun Sullivan had, it was not mine, nor was it loaded. When the Rev. Mr. Gilmour came up, I tried it before them, lest the people might say it was, and it had that instant been sent to be cleaned and Sullivan was going to do it when he met the men, who had some ill-will towards him on account of his preventing them from taking a mare by night out of the pound, of which his father is the keeper, and who quarrelled with him on that subject, with which I have nothing to do. It is untrue that Dr. Kirwan rescued the men from me, as he was not present during the time I was protecting Sullivan from them, but the Rev. Mr. Gilmour knows that, on his coming out of his house, which is within a few yards of the spot where this affair occurred, he found me standing peaceably, engaged in no contest, for the moment I succeeded in liberating the person attacked, I had no cause of quarrel with his assailants, whom I knew only in that character. I am further accused “of being rusticated for cruelty and oppression in collecting my tithes in Dunboyne.” To this I answer, that I have, for nearly ten years, held the vicarage of Dunboyne without a dispute with my parishioners, Protestant or Catholic, on the subject of tithes, or on any other account, and that, for the time I held that living, I have been absent but sixteen months. I am endeavouring to find out the correspondent of the Galway Free Press, and if I do I shall prosecute him for a libel on me, and thereby give him an opportunity of proving his charges. In the meantime, I request you will publish this my statement of the affair he has so misrepresented, lest, if my reply were not published, I might be deemed guilty of the conduct imputed to me either in Galway or in Meath. It would take up too much of your paper, and I am not fond of writing long letters, or I could point out more falsehoods industriously included in the epistle of the Rilkomin observer.

I remain, Sir, yours, &c. &c.,  
B. MARTIN.