

## SOUR FLOUR.

WE have received a letter from a gentleman in St. Thomas, C.W., who is engaged in milling, in which, though he has not made some parts of his subject very clear to our understanding, yet there are other matters which require some attention. He says: "Since my residence in Canada, I have read and heard many statements setting forth the impossibility of manufacturing, from Canadian wheat, an article of flour that will not become sour in a southern climate. I hold that this opinion is most erroneous, and should no longer be promulgated. I have been practically engaged in London and its suburbs from 1823 till 1843, and since then in Canada. I have shipped flour from England to all parts of the world, and never received a single complaint of acidity in my whole experience. This acidity is not produced by the heat; the same flour that will sour in a warm climate will do so equally in northern latitudes, and that this is the case is proven by the fact that the best American flour sells twenty-five per cent. below London made flour, though the wheat from which the former is made be in no wise inferior to the best English. The whole cause of the trouble is in the manufacturing, the science of which on this side the Atlantic is a whole generation behind the age; and, so far as Canada is concerned, is likely to remain so, so long as there is in any way legislative interference with the laws of supply and demand."

We are sorry that our correspondent did not let us into the secret of the two last sentences quoted. We are at a loss to know what Legislative interference exists in connection with the laws of supply and demand in the flour trade. We were of opinion that the Government had kept its hands off that trade particularly. We were also unaware that the science of milling was not as thoroughly understood in Canada as in England, and have grave doubts about the superior keeping qualities of English flour. In fact, we know that English flour does not keep in shipping one whit better than American flour, and that the best keeping flour with which we are acquainted is that made from wheat grown in the southern section of the Northern States. The reason of flour souring is no doubt not heat alone, or all flour would sour equally in the same climate. But it is the heat of the climate in conjunction with the moisture of the grain acting on the gluten which the grain contains which is the cause of the acidity, and by removing either of these causes that effect is not attained. Thus when we have a grain of wheat either naturally dry, as that grown in hot dry atmospheres or artificially dried, the heat of the weather can have no effect upon the flour made from it. And the process of artificially drying such wheat as that raised in Canada is the only one which, we believe, can be depended upon for the safety of the flour. It must not be supposed by those unacquainted with the flour business that all the flour made from Canadian wheat of necessity sours, but a very large portion of it does. And it seems strange that as yet, there has been no regular system of drying the wheat, adopted prior to its being ground. We should not suppose it to be necessary to dry it very highly as that would incur great loss in weight, but of bringing it up to the same standard of dryness which some of the best keeping descriptions possess. Shippers to South America and the West Indies will no doubt offer this summer inducements to millers to manufacture that description of flour, and will pay a price accordingly.

Our correspondent further calls our attention to some Act of Parliament which he does not particularly tell us the nature of, but to which he attaches great importance. Its effect is to encourage nothing but unscientific and bankrupt millers. As we must plead ignorance of any such Act and its workings, of course we cannot understand its results.

We are aware that whenever it is attempted to do anything out of the immediate straight and simple line, which has been pursued for years in any branch of business, there is an immediate opposition; a thousand objections are urged and difficulties thrown in the way. These objections may be demonstrated, but will exist in the imaginations of those urging them. But still it takes years to introduce any improvement into any system of procedure once adopted. If there was any hope of seeing such a thing adopted, we would urge upon our Board of Trade the necessity of taking the proper steps to have an inspection of flour established, based upon its dryness as well as its other qualities. This, in our opinion, would do more towards saving a large proportion of our flour from souring than any other means which could be adopted. It would give to the miller who dried his wheat the advantage of knowing that he was getting credit for that operation, and the miller who let remain in a barrel of flour 10 or 12 lbs. more moisture than was necessary, would not get the same price as the man who expelled it and put flour in its place.

We are of opinion that if a proper system of drying was once established, no flour could be sold here which had not undergone the process. There is not only the advantage of getting more flour in each barrel, thereby reducing the freight and expenses, but the certainty of that flour keeping from souring; and even to our city bakers that would be a great advantage. We certainly need not look forward to any South American or West India trade in Canadian flour until some means is adopted of drying it, as otherwise it would result in certain loss to all concerned.

## LETTER FROM THE WEST INDIES.

DEMERARA, Feb. 23th, 1866.

## DEAR REVIEW:

IN my last communication I gave you a few figures and facts in reference to Barbados. In this I will confine my remarks to another beautiful island—Trinidad. Trinidad is indeed a beautiful island, and its scenery is not to be surpassed by any of its West Indian sisters. The long ranges of mountains or hills running parallel with the beach, for nearly the whole length of the four sides of the island: deep set gorges apparently rent by some powerful convulsion of nature, in the solid cliffs, leading to lonely secluded villas, which, if but the rank vegetation of a tropical underwood were removed, might become perfect Edens; perpendicular steep, grass covered only; and gently inclined slopes, hidden by forests containing some of the finest furniture woods in the world—are natural features, which, united to a salubrious and delightful climate, combine to make Trinidad one of the loveliest islands in the Caribbean Sea. But it has other resources and peculiarities besides fertility and beauty, to distinguish it from any of the islands surrounding it. It can boast of two mineral springs—one at Maracass, and the other at Point a Pierre—but its crowning wonder is, without any doubt, "The Pitch Lake." This wonderful and singular natural formation is situated at a place called La Brea, and is about sixteen or twenty miles from Port au Spain, the Capital of the island. Its area is between one hundred and two hundred acres,—that is the lake itself,—but the same formation extends down to the sea shore, and even for some distance under the sea. The substance itself is a hard, black, shiny pitch,—this is the appearance of that along the road to the lake, (which is about a mile from the shore), but that found in the lake—in some parts of it—is quite soft and almost liquid. But the most singular thing about this lake is, that all attempts hitherto made to find out the depth of this formation, have been futile, and that, too, from natural causes which I will explain. The men engaged in mining the pitch, work on the surface of the lake, which is comparatively hard, (except in some places, where, as I have already said, it is soft and liquid), with pick axes and spades, chopping out the solid pitch in good sized pieces, but the elasticity and expansibility of this substance is so great, that even when they have dug a pit, say to the depth of four or five feet, and perhaps six feet long, by five feet wide, in the course of a day, they will find on returning to their work in the morning, the walls of this hole approximating so closely as to be almost touching each other, and if left for four or five hours longer, there is not to be seen the slightest trace of where the night before was a yawning pit in the surface, and thus no sensible diminution is visible in the quantity existing in the lake, even with the large amount annually removed, for shipment to foreign ports. Very considerable quantities of this pitch are annually exported to England, in vessels chartered for that purpose, from which oil is refined. It is also used for the ordinary purposes of gravel roofing. Of course the theories as to the cause of this singular formation, are various, but the most sensible one is that it is of the same nature as the gum beds in oil regions, produced probably by the solidifying of the exudations of oil, and that it undoubtedly overlies vast quantities of oil, which some day, if developed, will prove Trinidad to contain a richer and more inexhaustible oil treasure, than has yet been discovered in the known world. We understand that an American company who have purchased some land near the lake, are preparing to bore for oil; but, from the difficulty experienced in transporting machinery, and securing labourers who understand the business, their efforts as yet have not resulted very favourably, but they are sanguine of success, and doubtless before many months, we will hear of their having made a great strike.

But apart from these natural features, the consuming capabilities of this island are not inferior to that of

any of its neighbours, and Trinidad also has to depend on America for breadstuffs and other necessities. The last quotations I have before me are the prices current of the 23rd of January, 1866.

Beef, (family) per half barrel, duty \$1 per half bl.	\$14 00
Bran, per bag, 4 bush., duty 3½ per cent, ad val.	1 25
Bricks, (com) red, per 1000, duty 2½, per 1000.	\$13 00 to 10 00
Bricks, grey, stock, per 1000; duty 2½, per 1000.	20 00 to 22 00
Butter, (French) per keg, 75 lbs.; duty 50c. per 100 lbs.	18 00
Candles, (tallow) per lb.; duty \$1.44 per 100 lbs.	17½
Cheese, (American) per lb.; duty \$1.20 per 100 lbs.	22
Codfish, per tierce; duty 2½, per 100 lbs.	21 00
Corn meal, per brl.; duty 25c. per barrel.	3 50 to 4 00
Corn, (yellow) 2 bush. bag; duty 10c. per bag.	2 61
Flour, per brl. (extra); duty \$1.20 per barrel.	5 00
Hams, (American) per lb.; duty \$1.00 per 100 lbs.	18
Hay, per 100 lbs.; duty 3½ per cent. ad val.	1 50
Hoops, (wood) per 1000; 3½ per cent. ad val.	23 00 to 30 00
Hoops, (iron) per 1000 lbs.; 5 per cent. ad val.	3 00
Horses, per head, duty \$9.50 per head.	120 00 to 160 00
Lard, per lb., duty 60c. per 100 lbs.	19
Lumber, W.P., per 1000 feet; duty \$1.50 per 1000 feet.	24 00
Lumber, P.P., per 1000 feet; duty \$1.50 per 1000 feet.	35 00
Matches, per gross, duty 60c. per gross.	15 00 to 16 50
Oats, per puncheon, duty 5c. per bush.	10 00
Peas, B.E., per bush. bag; duty 5c. per bush.	2 50
Peas, (split) per barrel; duty 5c. per bush.	7 00
Pork, (mess) per barrel; duty \$2 per barrel.	25 00
Pork, (clear) per barrel; duty \$2 per barrel.	23 00
Potatoes, per barrel; 3½ per cent. ad val.	1 50
Shingles, (cedar and pine); duty 2½, per 1,000.	3 25
Staves, R.O., per 1,000; duty \$2.40 " W.O., " "	55 00
Shooks, (old) 33 inch; duty 12c. per 1,000.	1 50
Shooks, (new) 33 inch, duty 12c. per 1,000.	none in market.

The only difficulty about Trinidad is the shallowness of the water at Port-au-Spain, the capital of the island, and vessels drawing much water are compelled to anchor at some distance from the town; but the large number of capacious lighters, which quickly discharge and load cargoes, to a great extent, do away with this inconvenience.

The chief productions of the island are sugar, rum, molasses, and cocoa, the latter article being of a very superior quality, and often bringing in the London market 20s per cwt more than the ordinary price.

Coffee, equal to Mocha, is also grown, but not more than is sufficient for the consumption of the island at the present time. Rice also grows in great luxuriance, and is considered equal in quality to the best Carolina, while cotton appears wild in many places, and was in former times one of the staples of the colony. In short, it is scarcely possible to over-estimate the advantages to which the almost virgin soil of this beautiful island is capable of being applied. Trusting that these few facts will interest yourself and readers, I will for a time at least lay down my pen.

## Opening of the Canadian Canals.

The Welland Canal is clear of ice and open for navigation. The St. Lawrence Canals, we understand, will not be open until the first of May.