

### A Partial Concession.

The question of how our farmers could most profitably use the abundance of rough grain and roots, and the bleached and otherwise damaged wheat in their possession has been agitating the minds of most people in this country of late, and with the view of to some extent solving this question, the publisher communicated with the Honorable the Minister of Agriculture at Ottawa, on the question of duties and quarantine on live hogs imported from the United States, receiving a prompt and straightforward reply. The following correspondence is the best explanation of itself:

WINNIPEG, MAN., October 24th, 1890.

Honorable John Carling, Minister of Agriculture, Dominion of Canada, Ottawa, Ont.

HONORABLE AND DEAR SIR.—Permit me to draw your attention to the situation as it is at present stands with the farmers of Manitoba and the adjoining territories, and bring before your notice a matter not likely to be so apparent to you as it is to me, a commercial journalist, before whom the notice of such matters are daily brought.

I refer to the state of the grain crop in this country, a crop which is certainly an abundant one, so far as quantity is concerned, but which, owing to wet and unfavorable weather during the past two months, has lost much of its market value, and quite a large proportion of which is now unfit for milling purposes, and will have great difficulty in finding a market, even at prices which mean loss to our struggling producers. I am not overstating the situation, when I state that there will be from three to four millions of bushels of this season's wheat crop unfit for milling purposes, and which must be allowed to go to waste, unless it is fed to hogs, the only animals to which such wheat can be fed with safety and profit.

To enable you to fully comprehend how matters now stand with farmers in possession of such damaged stuff, a view of the hog product situation is necessary, and that view is anything but encouraging. Several years of drought have had the effect of reducing the production of rough grain and other feed in this country, and the crop of 1889 was so short in barley, oats and root crops, that last spring heavy importations of those had to be made to fill the local demand. With such commodities at ransom prices, and the crop returns in cash for other products very limited, our farmers last fall were not in a position to winter over hogs, and they were consequently slaughtered and sold in the local markets during the winter for what they would bring, and with a plethora of pork thus rushed in, prices were naturally low. Many farmers were compelled to slaughter pigs which did not dress forty pounds weight, for there was but one alternative, and that was to let them freeze and die of hunger.

I have given you the hog picture of last fall and winter, and a look at the picture this fall furnishes an extraordinary contrast. Beside the millions of bushels of damaged wheat referred to, the country is loaded with rough grain and root products, much of which would have found a profitable market in the western United States, but for the changed situation brought about by the celebrated McKinley bill. Eastern Canadian markets are such that, unless in oats, the long haul and consequent heavy freight rates put shipping there out of

the question. The fact stares us in the face that we have products which will bring millions of dollars of wealth to our farmers if fed to make pork, but which are practically valueless if not utilized in that process. At present there are practically no hogs in the possession of our farmers, owing to last year's indiscriminate slaughter, and all they do possess would not number 10,000 all told. You can drive five miles through several of the well settled districts here, and not hear the squeak of a pig, and on the Winnipeg market where in October dressed hogs are usually plentiful, I have not heard of half a dozen being offered this season. Our pork packers are buying live hogs in Ontario or importing dressed ones from the United States, in order to get enough to fill their local order, and they are this week offering nine and a half cents a pound for dressed hogs, and cannot get them even at that advanced price.

Unless our farmers are to lose millions of dollars during the next year, there must be a heavy importation of hogs this winter, and in their present pecuniary position our farmers are not able to pay fancy prices. Our pork packers are buying live hogs in Ontario at 5½ a pound weight, which means not less than 8c a pound to the farmer, who would like to buy. In Chicago the range of prices is from 3½ to 4½ a pound, and in the State of Iowa and Southern Minnesota any number of the very class of hogs our farmers want can be had for 3 to 3½ a pound, and even less than the lower figure, for our people can do best with animals not fat enough for the packer, and in the states I refer to the failure of the corn crop will throw hundreds of thousands of such stock into the market from men who are not foolish enough to winter hogs worth less than four cents a pound on corn they can sell for about forty cents a bushel. A novice in pork raising can see the folly of such an undertaking.

Now the gist of my appeal to you is, that some steps be taken to remove the duty on live hogs coming into this province for a few months, and at the same time remove the practically prohibitory quarantine regulations which now exist in connection with the import of such stock, so that our farmer may secure a supply of hogs for feeding and breeding purposes from the cheapest possible market. Under the provision of hogs admitted free for breeding purposes, there should be no difficulty in admitting breeding sows and blooded stock boars, and if the privileges were even so limited, I believe most of the difficulties of the present situation would be overcome. Of course the quarantine regulations would have to be limited to the simple passing of an inspection without any delay, otherwise the tariff concession would be valueless.

I have taken the liberty of writing you personally on this matter, believing that you and your colleagues in the Dominion Government will be only too anxious to do all in your power to mitigate any burdens our farmers may be under; and because I consider a private letter from one, who has every opportunity of thoroughly understanding the subject, is more likely to receive your favorable consideration, than an article in a newspaper, likely to be interpreted as an attempt to raise an agitation.

I respectfully request that you will give your prompt attention to the subject I have referred to, and that you will bring the matter before your colleagues, and use your influence to in

some way mitigate the pressure, which the unfavorable weather of the past two months has brought upon our Northwestern farmers.

I have the honor to be

Your obedient servant,  
JAMES E. STEW.

### REPLY.

Department of Agriculture,  
OTTAWA, Nov. 4th, 1890.

SIR,—The Minister of Agriculture desires me to acknowledge your letter of the 24th ult., on the subject of customs duties and quarantine regulations in relation to the importation of swine in the province of Manitoba, in the special circumstances stated in your letter.

Your letter referred to has been submitted by the Minister of Agriculture to his colleagues in Council. The most careful consideration has been given to the several representations made by you; and it is desired to give effect, in as far as possible, to the request in your letter.

With respect to the suspension of the tariff, so far as it affects the importation of swine into the province of Manitoba, I am to state that no power is vested either in the Minister of Customs, or the Governor-in-Council, to set aside its provisions, as adopted by Parliament.

It is, however, thought that the customs duties would not be an impediment to importation at the prices and in the circumstances stated by you.

With respect to the quarantine regulations I am to inform you that it is considered advisable to give effect to the recommendation in your letter and suspend the regulation making a quarantine of observation of twenty-one days, necessary at the port of entry, in so far as relates to the province of Manitoba, until further ordered, and the necessary steps will be at once taken.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. LOWE,

Deputy of the Minister of Agriculture.

### Another Canadian Tunnel.

The Prince Edward Island tunnel project is revived by the success of the St. Clair tunnel. The Dominion Government has been asked to assist in the scheme, for which preliminary surveys have all been made. "There are," says *Engineering News*, "no great engineering difficulties in the way; but at the nearest points between Prince Edward Island and the main land a tunnel 6½ miles long would be required, and the estimated cost is \$17,000,000. An English syndicate has offered to build the tunnel if the Canadian Government will guarantee 6 per cent interest on the bonds for one hundred years."

A communication has been received at this office addressed to "THE COMMERCIAL", Winnipeg, British Columbia. This mistake was probably caused by the amount of attention "THE COMMERCIAL" has been giving to British Columbia of late.

The *Canadian Manufacturer*, Toronto, announces that its subscription price will hereafter be one dollar per year instead of two dollars as heretofore. The size of the pages and the number of them will remain unchanged, and it will be issued twice a month as it has been ever since its establishment in 1882. It is devoted to the manufacturing interests of Canada,