

THE WEST INDIES.

CANADIAN FLOUR TRADE WITH THE WEST INDIES. CON. MILLER'S LETTERS.  
 POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING A FAVORABLE  
 FLOUR TRADE.

WERE this the proper place it would be an interesting and pleasant task to present our readers with a letter-press description of the West India Islands, to tell of their charm of climate, the story of their rich resources in toothsome fruits; and the many delights, especially in those who live in a more frigid zone, of this beautiful tropical country. But this is not the purpose of the MILLER just now.

No one is likely to take more interest in these things than members of the milling fraternity. These islands, however, have another attraction to Canadian millers, and that is in the field they open out for the consumption of Canadian mill products. In Jamaica, with its population of 650,000, Barbadoes, the Bermudas, British Guiana, Martinique and the other West India Islands, there is undoubtedly a large field for Canadian flours, and the question that interests millers just now is how they may secure, at least, a fair share of the flour trade of those islands. The official figures tell us that the value of wheat and wheat flour exported by the United States to British Guiana and the West India Islands averages about \$7,000,000 a year. From an inquiry made by the Executive of the Dominion Millers' Association a year ago, it is learned that a total of 524,800 bbls. of flour are imported by the West Indies yearly.

This is a trade worth securing and the purpose of the present chapter is to throw some light on the subject.

ENCOURAGEMENTS AND DIFFICULTIES.

THESE are very fully treated in an interview further along in this chapter with Mr. Adam Brown, who, during his visit to Jamaica, representing Canada as honorary commissioner at the exhibition of 1891, did yeoman service in furthering the interests of Canadian flour on the islands. The interview ought certainly to be read by every miller. Mr. Brown tells, as he has done before in his official report, that the trade in flour with the West Indies is, of course, in the right manner. This view has been confirmed by a letter from Hon. Geo. E. Foster, written to the Millers' Association in 1891. Both Mr. Brown and Mr. Foster place every emphasis on the necessity of sending to the Indies only a flour that can be guaranteed for a period of at least two months. There is good reason to believe that Canada's opportunities for flour trade with these islands have been injured through flour of an inferior quality having been sent there.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. ADAM BROWN.

HOW CANADIAN MILLERS MAY SECURE A FAVORABLE WEST INDIES FLOUR TRADE.

WITH the view of securing additional information concerning the West India trade in Canadian flour a representative of the CANADIAN MILLER paid a visit to Mr. Adam Brown, postmaster at Hamilton, and honorary commissioner to the Jamaica exhibition for Canada in 1891. As with everyone who has had occasion to meet Mr. Brown, either in his official or private capacity, the writer found him most approachable, genial and ready to impart whatever information was in his power.

"Of course your particular interest," said the ex-commissioner, "is in Canadian flour and let me say how glad I am to find you are paying attention to this question. What you had to say in the last issue of the MILLER ought to prove food for thought with every miller who has an ambition to see his trade develop outside of mere local boundaries.

"My interest in the trade of the West Indies dates back to the days when I was a young man, a clerk with Gillespie, Moffatt & Co., of Montreal. That is more than twenty-five years ago, and at that time a large trade was done with the Indies in Canadian products, flour included. These were the days of sailing vessels, and placed in even competition with the United States, as regards carrying facilities, there was no trouble in Canadians holding a large share of the trade with those islands. But conditions change. Steam took the place of canvas, and for a score of years, up to the time of the Jamaica exhibition in 1891, our business with the Indies became almost a blank. This circumstance of itself is an answer to the question sometimes asked, 'How has the United States succeeded in securing such a strong grip on West India trade?'

OPENING TRADE WITH THE INDIES.

"Having received my appointment from the Dominion government to represent Canada at Jamaica, I lost no time in ascertaining what products were most required in the Indies. Flour occupied a foremost place in the list. To interest Canadian millers I addressed a convention of Ontario millers a few months before leaving for the tropics. I had before the meeting what seemed to me the plan needful to secure the flour trade of the Indies. I will be frank in saying that I received but scant encouragement from these gentlemen as a body. They did not seem to grasp the situation, and to realize the volume of trade that was theirs, if they wanted it. About

have followed the suggestions born of my experience and experiments when in the Indies, their flours have never failed to give the fullest satisfaction. I notice that in last month's MILLER you publish results of an analysis of flours made in Georgetown, Demerara, which gives the St. Lawrence, a United States brand, the place of honor over our flours. I am not so sure that the test in question is a fair one. The Americans do not like the possibility of Canadians capturing the flour trade that they have held for so many years, and various efforts are adopted to create a prejudice against Canadian flours. This may be one of those peculiar moves. This I do know, that in Jamaica we met the St. Lawrence brand and downed it with Canadian flour every time. Flour made from Manitoba hard wheat will stand every test that these tropical climates call for. Wherever Canadian flours have proved disappointing, it has been because our millers have shipped in an inferior quality of flour." Here Mr. Brown instanced two cases in particular that had come under his notice, where a poor flour had been shipped to the Indies and our trade suffered seriously as a result.

METHODS OF SHIPPING.

"Complaint has been made in the past," I remarked, "of the character of our packages." "Yes," replied Mr. Brown, "it is folly to make shipments to the Indies except in barrels with round hickory hoops. Our millers were disposed to treat this as a trifling matter, and were slow to reject the round hoop barrel, and thereby lost trade. Aside from the foolishness of butting against the customs of the country, the round hoop means money to the West India flour handler. After the barrels are empty they can be sold for 1s. 3d. and 1s. 6d., for packing oranges, pine apples and other fruits. This figure comes into the calculation of the flour handler in estimating the price paid for his flour. Flat hoop barrels are worth nothing."

IMPROVED CARRYING FACILITIES REQUIRED.

"I have mentioned," continued Mr. Brown, "in answer to a suggestive inquiry, 'how well



MORTEGO BAY, JAMAICA.

the same time I communicated with a number of the leading milling firms of the country and interested them to the extent of making shipments of flour to the exhibition. The millers who made exhibits at that time were W. W. Ogilvie and Ira Gould & Sons, of Montreal; Lake of the Woods Milling Co., Keewatin; Todd Milling Company, Galt; James Goldie, Guelph; White-law & Baird, Paris, and Walker, Harper & Co., Norwich.

DRY FLOUR AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY.

"The Hon. Mr. Foster said to me, 'If you can be sure of the flour you take to the Islands holding sweet for not less than 60 days, then success is made.' This purpose I kept steadily in view at the start, and was able to prove before the exhibition was over that Canadian flour would not only keep sweet for 60 days, but I was able to make a distribution of bread made from Canadian flour that had been in store in Jamaica for four months, and everyone was ready to declare that sweeter or better bread had never been eaten in Jamaica. Flour sent from Canada must be made of perfectly dry wheat-Manitoba No. 1 hard-and when this is done, United States competition need not be feared."

I asked Mr. Brown "How it was then, when we certainly had the wheat to make the particular brand of flour necessary to this tropical climate, that Canadian flours were being criticised as holding only a second, third or fourth place among the flours imported into the Indies? "

"Let me be very clear on this point," said Mr. Brown, with some emphasis. "Wherever Canadian millers

Canada fared in West India trade when we were on a par in carrying facilities. We are suffering some to-day for want of quicker vessel service between Halifax and the West Indies. We are told that we have a fortnightly service, and in one sense this is correct. Vessels of the Pickford & Black line leave Halifax or St. John twice a month, but they go to different groups of islands. The service is only once a month to each section of the islands. If a miller is shipping to Demerara, for example, and his supplies are a few days late in reaching Halifax, the goods must be held until the next monthly boat leaves. With a regular weekly service from New York our exporters are necessarily handicapped, depending on the Canadian line. Merchants in the islands would tell me they could order flour through New York with the certainty of receiving it promptly almost to the day. This could not be done ordering from Canadian millers. Their flour is shipped chiefly with draft attached to bill of lading, payable at sight. I have known the draft to be presented by bank, before the flour had actually left Halifax. Merchants do not relish doing business in this manner, and this circumstance has operated against a greater expansion of Canadian flour trade with the Indies. It would be helpful to Canadian trade in all its interests if Canada would become an importer of the natural products of the West Indies. It really seems too bad that with a sister colony within comparatively easy reach of ourselves, that the rich resources in the line of fruits grown there come to us by way of a foreign country. A development of trade that would permit of frequent return cargoes from the Indies would materially