PROSPECTS FOR EXPORT OF TENDER FRUITS.

JAS. W. ROBERTSON, Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying, said:

Mr. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—Before I say much about the prospects for an export demand for tender fruits I would like to make a few observations on the present status of the business of growing tender fruits in Canada. In considering why many people went into fruit-growing, one is soon led to the conclusion, that the general fall in the prices of cereals a while ago made many give up grain farming, in which they had had experience, and for which they had natural aptitude, and go into fruit-growing, without either the special knowledge or personal fitness for making a success of that business. Great areas of Canada are devoted to fruit-growing for that reason. When the ordinary operations of farming did not pay well, there was much discussion as to whether fruit-growing would not pay better. There was a great deal of information of the most indefinite kind diffused over the Province in regard to the benefits and advantages and profits of fruit-growing, and the consequent agitation led a great many men into that business. That was a good thing for agriculture and a good thing for those men, because for a while the fruit-growing business paid very well—much better than the land which was devoted to it had paid the occupiers through ordinary farm work.

SOME REASONS FOR GLUTTED MARKETS.

That leads one to examine into the kinds of fruit that these people have been growing and why they grow the kinds they do grow. Most of the men have planted the kinds that can be grown easiest, with least risk, and that yield largely, without regard to whether there would be a permanent or large enough demand for that class of fruit. In addition to growing the kinds that I have alluded to, they have grown many kinds, and still grow them just because they have some interesting characteristics, and because the "cuts" of them look well in some nice book or catalogue. If one goes over a fruit farm and examines the kinds that are growing and why they are being grown, he will find that while my statements are rather unpalatable, they are quite true in regard to most farms where fruit-growing is carried on. That has led to this state of things in Canada, that the Canadian fruit-growers are growing more tender fruits than their home markets take care of. I do not say that they are growing more tender fruits than the people of Canada can and would readily consume if they got the kinds they want in the condition they like them. We import and pay out more money for tender fruits from California than would fill the pockets of a great many Ontario fruit-growers with all the profits they could expect from their business. The markets are glutted, not because the Canadian appetite is satisfied with Canadian fruits, but because Canadian fruits have not been of the sort or put up in the way that the Canadian consumer wants; and if not suitable for the Canadian, how much less for the ten times more fastidious Englishman? I want to have you think of that before I speak of the prospects for a export trade in tender fruits.