

In cheese, on the other hand, the strides made by Canada have been remarkable. Thirty years ago our export of cheese did not amount in value to \$1,500. In 1878 it was worth \$4,121,000, and in 1885, as the *Blue Book* shows, it realized \$8,265,000. Last fiscal year, when the average price obtained was two cents less per pound, the amount was less, though the quantity was nearly as great. For the present year—we speak now of the twelve months from May, 1887, to May, 1888—the export of cheese is estimated by an expert at 1,150,000 boxes, representing a value of between \$8,000,000 and \$9,000,000. This estimate we find made by Mr. A. A. Ayer, of Montreal, a well known dealer in cheese, who contributes facts and figures to last Monday's *Mail* which go to demonstrate the importance to Canada of her cheese exports.

Mr Ayer goes too far, however, and his figures are apt to be misleading when he says, as reported in the *Mail*, after quoting exports during last shipping season (at Montreal presumably) "from the foregoing it will be seen that cheese heads the list of Canadian exports of Canadian produce by a long way," which is "the strongest possible proof of the value of the cheese trade, not only to Montreal but to the whole country." It is pleasant to see a man loyal to his trade and the city he lives in, but he should not, in his enthusiasm, become unjust to other industries or other parts of the country. We fear that Mr. Ayer has been too truly loyal to Montreal, and to cheese, to be just. For instance; he quotes exports of seven principal articles, by Saint Lawrence route, for seven months, from 1st May to 1st December last, as showing a total value of \$16,918,000, and because cheese is the largest item among these he appears to assume that "cheese heads the list of exports of Canadian produce." By putting Mr. Ayer's figures side by side with the statistics of export in the Trade and Navigation returns of 1886 we shall obtain a fairer idea of the value of Canadian exports:

BLUE BOOK OF 1886 EXPORTS.		MR. AYER'S
		FIGURES.
Deals	\$7,652,830	\$1,586,943
Horned cattle	5,825,188	4,579,257
Wheat	3,025,864	1,575,334
Flour	1,744,970	1,145,510
Peas	2,207,093	1,235,123
Phosphate	431,951	424,940
Cheese	6,754,000	6,371,604
	\$27,641,896	\$16,918,711

The value of cheese shipments, instead of being 37.7 per cent. of the above total, as Mr. Ayer makes it out to be, is thus only 24.4 per cent., a very handsome figure, however. The proportion of value which cheese bears to the total foreign exports of Canada is rather less than ten per cent., measured by the official figures of the two years last issued.

The growth of Canadian export of cheese is likely to continue, according to this authority. For one reason, because cheese production in the United States has not kept pace with increased consumption in that country to such an extent as appreciably to augment the exports from New York. Then the climatic and geographical advantages of Canada are quoted as an additional reason for supposing that our cheese export

may double within the next ten years. Cheese-making has been taken hold of, we are told, with much energy in certain parts of Quebec. Not only by the American and English residents of the Eastern Townships but by the French Canadians around St. Hyacinthe—which is quite a cheese centre—and up around the Lake St. John.

Our cheese is in great demand in England, and the demand is due to the quality. A few years ago, Canadian cheese had no standing in the British market; now it is the peer of the best to be found there, English not excepted. This change is due to combination, symbolized in the cheese factory. What we have long wanted are creameries, to do for butter that which the cheese factories have done for cheese. A start has been made. The Agricultural College at Guelph, is imparting, in a practical way, the knowledge necessary for the accomplishment of this task. When creameries are once in successful operation throughout the country, several millions will be added to the wealth of the country yearly. Here is a chance for people of enterprise, who would like to do good for themselves and their country, at the same time; and it will not be long before it is turned to account.

MERCANTILE AGENCY REPORTS.

An important decision to mercantile men has just been given by the highest Ontario tribunal. It relates to the rights and privileges of mercantile agencies, whose business it is to procure and furnish to banks and wholesale merchants information about applicants for credit. Such information is often of a delicate or unfavorable character, and without it banks or wholesale houses might be victimized by unsafe or designing men. It is also liable to be prejudiced or inaccurate, in which case injury may be done to worthy applicants for money or merchandise. These agencies profess to be for the protection of trade; and where a credit business is done they are a necessary adjunct to it. It has repeatedly been held in the United States, that their communications to their clients are confidential and privileged, and now the highest court in this province affirms that principle.

In the matter of *Todd vs. Dun, Wiman & Co.*, the Court of Appeal for Ontario this week reversed the judgment of the Common Pleas Divisional Court, and held, in effect, that if in the weekly sheets issued by a mercantile agency the words "call at office" appear after any person's name, and the sheet specially sets out, that any information contained in it does not necessarily imply a bad report about the person referred to in it, then that these words are not necessarily libellous, and that to make them so the effect of the whole sheet must be shown to be libellous, and malice on the part of the Agency must be proved by the plaintiff before he can recover.

Todd was an Uxbridge merchant and sued Dun, Wiman & Co. for libel, for saying in their weekly sheet to their subscribers, that if interested in Todd, "call at their office." He also sued one Chapman, an agent of the Mercantile Agency, for libel, for making an unfavorable report to his principals about

him, Todd. The jury at the trial returned a verdict for the plaintiff, for \$100 against Dun Wiman & Co., and for \$25 against Chapman. This verdict was appealed from, to the Division Court, Common Pleas, where it was sustained; that court holding that although the letter from Chapman to his principals was privileged, yet that it was incumbent on him to shew that it was a fair, *bona fide* report, made without malice; and as he had not done so at the trial the verdict against him must stand. They further held, as to Dun, Wiman & Co., that the words "inquire at office" must be separated from the rest of the sheet, although it contained a warning that their words did not necessarily imply unfavorable information about the person so referred to, and further that these words must be taken to have a meaning injurious to the plaintiff's business.

The Court of Appeal has reversed this decision, holding that the whole sheet must be taken together, and that the words "call at office" do not imply a bad report, and that as the plaintiff has not shown that the statement taken as a whole was libellous, his action must fail and be dismissed. As to Chapman's letter, they held it to be privileged and that the onus of proof of malice and want of *bona fides* was on the plaintiff, and that since he had not given proof of these at the trial, his action must fail here, too, and be dismissed as against Chapman.

It is worth while to observe, that in the case of *Carsley vs. Bradstreet's Mercantile Agency*, the Quebec Superior Court took a narrower view, and last June decided that such communications as are made by these Agencies of Commerce to their subscribers, cannot be held to be privileged. Indeed the Court in that case declared that such agencies ought to ascertain the correctness of their reports and estimates—a difficult matter. It was adjudged in that case that defendants should pay \$2,000 damages to the plaintiff, but it had been shown that they made damaging communications about Carsley to some who were not subscribers. This Quebec decision is in marked contrast with that of a New Jersey Court, which was to the effect that such agencies being necessities of commerce, their reports were entitled to privilege.

A CONTINENTAL CUSTOMS' UNION.

Mr. Townsend, of the United States House of Representatives, has outbid Mr. Butterworth, in the Commercial Union market. He has "gone one better," made a higher bid: and if there be any dealings in Commercial Union, Mr. Townsend will carry off the laurels. He propounds a scheme of Customs' Union, embracing not only the United States and Canada, as Mr. Butterworth does, but also Mexico, Central and South America, including the empire of Brazil. This is a scheme of continental free trade, with a tariff wall against the rest of the world. To unrestricted free trade he would add a common system of silver coinage, under which the depreciated silver coinage of the United States might be palmed off, on the whole continent, at probably twenty per cent. above its real value, that being about the rate at which it