

# The Commercial

A Journal of Commerce, Industry and Finance, specially devoted to the interests of Western Canada, including that portion of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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*The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the country between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. By a thorough system of personal solicitation, carried out annually, this journal has been placed upon the desks of the great majority of business men in the vast district designated above, and including northwest Ontario, the provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia, and the territories of Assiniboia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.*

WINNIPEG, DECEMBER 4, 1893.

## AUSTRALIAN MUTTON.

It seems strange to talk about selling Australian mutton in Winnipeg, but there is a prospect that it may actually be done. Some Australian mutton has already been handled in British Columbia. The mutton is of course received in a frozen state. Large quantities of Australian mutton are shipped regularly to England, vessels being fitted up with refrigerator apartments particularly for this trade. Since the inauguration of the Canada-Australian fast steamship line, small trial shipments of Australian mutton have been made to this country, and the article has been placed in a limited way upon the British Columbia coast markets. The trade, however, cannot amount to anything of importance until cold storage facilities are provided at some convenient point in British Columbia—either Victoria or Vancouver. As these cold storage facilities do not exist at present, only a very limited quantity of mutton can be imported, and it must be consumed at once. With cold storage facilities at one of the British Columbian ports, a large quantity could be brought in and stored until required. In this way the mutton could be distributed daily or as required from the cold storage warehouses. It is doubtless only a matter of time when cold storage warehouses will be established in British Columbia coast cities. Warehouses of this nature are required for the fish trade and other branches of business besides the import mutton trade, and they will come in time.

The interesting feature about the Australian mutton trade is the proposal to supply the Winnipeg market with this article. Following

the establishing of refrigerator warehouses on the coast, it is proposed to ship the mutton to points along the railway as far as Winnipeg. The Canadian Pacific has already been asked for rates as far as Winnipeg for traffic of this nature. Mr. Bowron, of New Zealand, who is interested in the mutton trade, has been looking over the field and thinks that it can be made a success.

THE COMMERCIAL cannot be very sanguine of the trade, as far as the Winnipeg market is concerned, though no doubt considerable business might be done in the British Columbia coast cities for some time, provided the refrigerators were established to carry a stock of mutton from the arrival of one steamer to another. British Columbia imports considerable mutton and sheep from the States and as the Australian mutton is claimed to be a better article, it would no doubt command a ready sale. As for Manitoba, however, this province and the territories have now a sufficient home supply. Mutton has ruled high here in the past, when the supply was not equal to home requirements; but the local supply of sheep has been increasing year by year, and is now equal to the demand. It does not seem possible, therefore that Australian mutton will ever cut any figure in the Winnipeg market, notwithstanding the opinion of Mr. Bowron that Winnipeg affords a large market for the article. On the other hand, the prairie country should be able to supply the British Columbia market; and this is what we look for in a short time. The sheep raising industry has extended rapidly in Manitoba and the territories during the past few years, and this country will soon have a considerable surplus over home requirements, in which case we will have to look for outside markets. British Columbia is the most natural market for the surplus of the prairie country, and if the Australian mutton trade ever amounts to much in the coast cities, it will be in competition with prairie mutton.

Mr. Bowron says the Australian mutton is "infinitely superior to the home product, which leads him to believe that it would be preferred even at a greater cost than the home product. The wholesale price at Vancouver he places at about 10½ cents per pound. The Australian article may be better quality than a good deal of the mutton produced here, but we can hardly realize that it is better than mutton which can be produced here. The basis of a good many of the flocks in the prairie country was merino grade sheep, brought in from the States, and it is acknowledged that these sheep do not make good mutton; but they are being improved by careful breeding, and in time will make good mutton sheep. There are, however, many flocks of good mutton sheep in the country, which should make as fine a quality of mutton as the best Australian. Mutton is now worth about 8c in the Winnipeg market, at which price the Australian product could not hope to compete, even allowing for superior quality. If the prairie mutton comes into competition at all with the Australian product, it will be in the coast markets. Our sheep-raising interest may therefore take into account the probability of this competition in the future.

## LOW WHEAT PRICES.

A circular has been issued as a result of meetings of farmers in Dakota, advising farmers in the northwestern states to hold their wheat. The circular comes a little late in the day, as it is said the farmers in those states have already disposed of the bulk of their crop. In fact some Minneapolis grain speculators claim that the crop has been practically all marketed; but statements of this nature may be taken with some reserve. No doubt a large part of the crop has been marketed in the great northwestern wheat states, as is also true of Manitoba; but in all probability there is quite a little surplus wheat left in Minnesota and the Dakotas.

The fact, however, that a large portion of the crop was marketed early in the season, is further proof of the assertion made recently in THE COMMERCIAL, that farmers hold when prices are high and sell when they are low. There is, perhaps, another reason for this feature of the situation which is sometimes overlooked. A large number of farmers are always in debt, and immediately after harvest their creditors begin to push for payment. When prices are low, it takes more bushels of wheat to raise a given sum of money than when values are high, consequently when prices are low the farmers are obliged to sell more wheat to pay off their pressing obligations. This year the price has been unprecedentedly low, and sales of wheat in the early part of the season have been very heavy all over the country. It may be that these heavy sales are not due so much to the peculiar disposition of the farmers to sell when prices are low and hold when they are high, as to the fact that the farmers have been obliged to sell more bushels of wheat, on account of the low price, to meet their obligations.

As regards the circular issued to Dakota and Minnesota farmers urging them to hold their wheat, it calls to mind the circular issued by the Farmers' Alliance not so long ago but that it is still fresh in the memory of many, especially those farmers who accepted the advice and lost heavily thereby.

## NOTHING STRANGE ABOUT IT.

Now that Winnipeg has declared for tariff reform, some Liberals seem to wonder, and ask why could not the city have voted their ticket at the last general elections.—What has led to this change? they ask. THE COMMERCIAL has answered this already, by pointing out that it is not Winnipeg but the Liberal party which has changed. Unrestricted reciprocity was the Liberal policy at the last election, and unrestricted reciprocity is as near of kin to tariff reform as our worthy mayor is to the king of the Cannibal Islands. If the proposal to form a tariff compact with the highest tariff country in the world was a movement for tariff reform, then THE COMMERCIAL will resign claim to all knowledge of trade and tariff questions. The Liberal leader, Laurier, apparently does not recognize any connection between the present tariff reform policy of the party and their late lamented commercial union-unrestricted reciprocity platform. After the election in Winnipeg he wired the vicar here as follows. "I congratulate you upon the great