

Bringing Back Wheat.

The question of re-importing Manitoba wheat held in store at Buffalo, has stirred up a good deal of discussion down East. The Toronto correspondent of the Northwestern Miller writes as follows on this subject.

The question of the re-importation of Manitoba wheat from Buffalo into Ontario is giving rise to a large amount of discussion in grain and milling circles. The major part of this grain has gone through the hands of New York grain men, and was primarily intended for export. Certain conditions, however, combined to raise the price of Manitoba wheat in Canada, so that there was more money to be made in getting this grain back into the Queen's domains on this side of the Atlantic than in sending it abroad. Just here an interesting tariff query was raised: Could this grain be re-imported without paying duty? Clause 11 of the customs act deals with the matter, and reads as follows: "Any goods or packages, being the growth, product or manufacture of Canada, and having been exported therefrom and intended to be returned may be admitted free of duty on being reimported into Canada; provided such goods or packages were entered for exportation and branded or marked by a collector or proper officer of customs, and are fully identified by the collector or proper officer at the port or place where they are so re-imported; and provided, further, that the property in such goods or packages has continued in the person by whom they were exported, and that such reimportation takes place within one year of the expiration thereof." There is no Canadian customs officer at Buffalo, so that it would not seem that the law could be interpreted as to meet the desires of those who wish to bring this grain into Canada again. But, further, the existing laws prove a barrier to this step being taken. Most of the grain in question was shipped from Port Arthur or Fort William to Buffalo in American bottoms. If it were permitted to be reimported into Canada, it would be equivalent to a recognition of the rights of the United States vessels to carry Canadian produce from one Canadian port to another. Moreover, the customs order-in-council prescribing the routes by which domestic produce may be carried from one Canadian port to another through United States territories, also stands in the way, the Buffalo route never having been designated as one by which this class of Canadian produce could be allowed to enter the Dominion. Opinion among grain men and millers divides on the question, according to whether they are in want of Manitoba grain, or have a good supply of it on hand. Men who are short are going to find themselves in an awkward position if relief can not be secured in this direction. On the other hand, those who had taken a long view of the situation, and have good stocks on hand and are not worrying themselves. Others, again, claim that they shipped to Buffalo with a distinct understanding that, if wanted in Ontario, they could bring back the grain, free of duty. A. Cavanagh, of Cavanagh & Spink, grain merchants, has voiced this view of the question in these words: "We have about 71,000 bus. grain in Buffalo in bond, and before we shipped it from Fort William, on Nov. 19 last we notified the government that we could get no Canadian vessels to carry it. We have a letter from the Canadian customs collector at Fort Erie, stating that it made no difference whether it was shipped in American or Canadian vessels, so long as it did not change ownership and was kept in bond in the United States. We

shipped to Buffalo in preference to a Canadian port, for the reason that there we would have the advantage of both American and Canadian markets. If we had sent it to Owen Sound, we would have been compelled to sell to Ontario millers, but by sending it to Buffalo we had our choice, to sell either to New York or Toronto. Over 16,000, b.s. of this wheat has already passed the Canadian customs. The position is just this: part of this wheat was sent to Buffalo, to be sold to Canadian millers for consumption in Canada.

This wheat is in bond at Buffalo, and has not changed ownership. Besides this kind of wheat, of which there is probably 200,000 bus., there is also at Buffalo a large quantity of wheat that was originally sold to parties at New York and paid for by them. I understand that some of this had been resold to Canadians. There is a general feeling here that the wheat that was sent to Buffalo originally for reimportation into Canada and has not changed ownership should be allowed to come back free of duty, while that which has since been sold to Americans, and then re-sold to Canadians, should be compelled to pay the duty. The whole trouble arose in this way: a few big millers, who held very large stocks of Manitoba wheat at the lowest prices, at the close of navigation, bought up all this grain in sight, at Midland Collingwood, Owen Sound and Point Edward. In this way they took off the market all the supplies that the smaller millers had to draw from for their winter's grinding, and which they had depended upon. In other years, the smaller millers have bought from one to five cars at a time, as they required the wheat, but now they find that they can't buy at all, unless they buy all-rail wheat from Manitoba, at an advance of 20 cents on the price of October last. As soon as the big millers', last fall, secured all the wheat at Owen Sound, Collingwood, Midland and Point Edward, they immediately sent the price up in Manitoba, and this gave them a corner. Now about this wheat at Buffalo. There are 200,000 bushels that I say should be allowed into Canada free of duty. It is Canadian wheat, owned by Canadians, and was never owned by anybody else. It was taken to Buffalo last fall by American vessels simply because Canadian vessels could not be secured. It was placed in bond and could not get mixed. Canadian millers are demanding this wheat, part of which has already crossed the border free of duty. All the wheat that has changed ownership since it arrived in the United States, is properly barred out under the Canadian customs act, and the Government would be violating the law in allowing it back into Canada, but this is no reason why the wheat which is held there in bond, owned by Canadians, and held at Buffalo simply for storage purposes, should not come back." I interviewed C. B. Watts, secretary of the Dominion Millers' Association. He said: "The Association could take but one position on the matter, and that was to stand by the law. The law is plain on the question, and the customs authorities at Ottawa have stated that it is such that the wheat in question can not be brought back, under any conditions, without payment of duty. The Dominion Millers' Association has, all along, insisted on the enforcement of customs and railway laws. In the fight against underbidding this has been its position. Certain members of the Association were found guilty of this practice, but the Association said, let the law be enforced. This is its attitude on the discrimination in freight rates between wheat and flour. When it has believed a law unjust, it has agitated for an amendment. But it has never given any encouragement, nor will it, to the violation of law." I would not like to say that anything of the kind would occur were the government to permit certain parts of the wheat at Buffalo to come into Canada free of

duty, but, as a prominent miller has remarked, it would be an easy matter, another season, for such a combination to be formed, between speculators in Manitoba and New York, as to constitute a corner in Manitoba wheat that would work seriously against the interests of the milling business and the best interests of the country as a whole. Further, it has been suggested, that were the disposition to play sharp, it would be quite possible, another season, for Duluth wheat to be sent into Canada from Buffalo as Manitoba grain, and be brought into competition with the home-grown grain.

Australian Union

A conference of the Australasian premiers, to discuss the subject of federation, will be held at Hobart Town, Tasmania, on January 28.

An immense and exceedingly enthusiastic meeting was held in the town hall, Melbourne on January 23, in support of Australian federation. Sir J. Madden, crown prosecutor of Victoria, presided. R. H. Reid, premier of New South Wales, advocated the abolition of the hostile tariffs and strongly supported federation. "It would be better," he said, "to accomplish federation now, at our leisure, than to be compelled to do so in our haste in the future. New South Wales will support only a clear definite scheme." Speeches in support of Mr. Reid's plan were also made by Premier Turner and Mr. Paterson, of Victoria, and Premier Kingston, of South Australia.

Another Drop in Wire.

When the new price on barb wire, plain twist wire and staples went into force on the 4th inst., no one probably dreamed that another change would be ordered by the manufacturers inside of ten days, yet such has actually happened.

The meeting which decided upon the change was held on Tuesday last, and the new figures went into effect the following day.

Barb wire, plain twist and staples are now down to \$2.87½ per 100 lbs., delivered in 500 lb. quantities. Discount is as before at 60 days or 2 per cent. off 90 days.

The meeting in question was held in Toronto, but the only members present were Mr. Cyrus A. Birge, of the Canada Screw Co., Hamilton, and Mr. McCormick, of the Dominion Wire Co., Montreal. The association has yet to deal with plain wire, and the two members in question have gone to Montreal to confer with the manufacturers there in the matter.

The immediate cause of this last reduction in price is a determination on the part of the Canadian manufacturers to meet competition from the United States.

The decline in the price of wire during the last year or two has been remarkable. At one time barb wire was 8c. per lb. Five years ago at this time barb wire was quoted at 5½ to 6c. per lb.; plain twist at 4½ to 5c., and staples at 5 to 5½c. In 1891 barb was 5 to 5½c., plain twist 5c., staples, 5 to 5½c. A year later barb and plain twist were quoted equal at 4½ to 5c. per lb., and staples had got down to 4½ to 4¾c. In 1893 4½ to 4¾ represented the price of the two wires, while staples were 1c. lower than in 1892. Last January at this date barb wire was quoted at 4 to 4½c. per lb., and plain twist at 3½ to 4c. and staples 3½ to 4c. Now, as already noted, \$2.87½ per 100 lbs. represents the price all round.

Whatever the profits of the manufacturers might have been in the palmy days, it is generally conceded that it will keep them hustling to make money at the figures now obtaining.—Toronto Hardware Merchant.