

plan was excellent in its way, and brimful of ingenuity: but, unfortunately for its practical application, the spindles of our own staple trade have only been partially supplied with flax for some years past; there is, consequently not a single pound of that article to spare from its legitimate source of consumption. To give effect to any plan of producing from flax a substance like cotton we must first have enough and to spare—a result not likely to be realised for some years to come.

Merchants and other capitalists connected with the linen trade have been making great exertions, for years past, to bring about a more ample supply of raw material; but, to this day the effect of their exertions has only been partial, and still the cry of famine in the flax market rings from Belfast to Dundee, and from Dunfermline to Leeds. During the last forty years, the value of raw cotton has so fallen in price that its manufacturers have been enabled to produce goods suited to the wants of all classes, and thus the use of muslin and calico as articles of clothing has become so general in nearly all parts of the world that steam-power, acting on spindle and loom, is taxed to the uttermost of its gigantic strength to meet the necessities of the millions of people of all nations and climes who clothe themselves with the products of the cotton plant. We have alluded to the vast reduction which has taken place in the cost of cotton wool since 1841, but from that date no such change has occurred in the value of flax; and hence the linen trade has lost all the advantages which would inevitably have resulted from a gradually downward figure in the price of raw material.

Within the last few days, we have had some conversation with the highly intelligent gentleman who, as the accredited agent of the Canadian Government, has been sent over to this country for the purpose of ascertaining the probabilities of success in an extended system of flax culture in Upper Canada. From all we have been able to ascertain on the subject, there seems to be no doubt that, by due energy on the part of the Canadians, coupled with a fair prospect of remunerative prices here, the lands of that colony would soon produce very large additions to our present supplies of flax. It is well known to those acquainted with the agricultural affairs of Canada, that many of the farmers there have for years past been growing wheat on the same lands, until, as was once the case with the potato fields of the South and West of Ireland, the soil has been seriously deteriorated in its productive powers. The change, therefore, from incessant cropping with one description of grain to the rotatory system caused by the introduction of flax-growing would benefit the soil hardly less than it would advantage the cultivator.

It has been said that labour is still too high in Canada to admit of any remarkable success in the growth of an article that requires so much attention during all its stages of culture; but those who argue thus forget that the Canadian colonist is the monarch of the soil on which he has located himself. The land is his own property, purchased direct from the Crown; he does not owe fealty to any landlord. Where he stands, within the limits of

his farm, he is its chief; and the extent of local taxation does not exceed a fractional percentage on the value of his land. Then, as to the nominal price of labour, we grant it is far above the value in this country. As a set-off, however, it may be stated that an able-bodied man will do as much work there in the course of a day, as is usually performed here in a day and a half. Agricultural energy is pushed on with great spirit; in fact, the farmer and his operatives seem to work with the steam at high pressure.

If then, the Canadian flax-grower has so many things in his favour—if he has lands which contain all the elements so peculiarly required for the food of the plant—we do not see why he should not be able to produce a quality of fibre which would fully remunerate him for his outlay and enterprise. What with the recent improvements in the machinery for spinning linen yarn, and the remarkable success that has attended the adaptation of steam to the linen loom, there seems to be no limit to the quantity of flax that could be worked up in the United Kingdom, were that flax produced in such amplitude and at such prices as would give full play to the taste for the wear of linen as an article of clothing. For some years past, the supplies of flax have actually been falling off in this country. In 1853, there were 1,882,400 cwts. of foreign flax imported, and 867,000 cwts. growing in Ireland. Last year the imports only amounted to 1,464,300 cwts., and the produce of Irish lands did not exceed 650,000 cwts. While this decline was going on in the supplies of flax, those of cotton rose from 8,500,000 cwts. to 12,419,000 cwts.

The India Flax Society has gone to work in right earnest, and, we doubt not, will be able to produce large accessions to existing supplies; but, granting all this, there will still be a wide field of operations; and that field might be well located in Canada. Were the farmers of that colony to raise annually three hundred thousand acres of flax, every single stone weight of the produce could be worked up by Irish spindles alone. We would request the special attention of spinners, manufacturers, and bleachers to this subject. It is a vital one now, more than ever it was before. With the ports of France opening to us, Belgium will also take largely of our yarns and linens.

The Hanse Towns, with their half million of people, took last year ten million yards of our linen cloth; and Holland, with its population only equal to that of the city of London, took three and a half million pounds of yarn. Other States are following in the wake of these Free-trade countries; but, to enable our capitalists to take full advantage of the favorable openings for yarns and goods, there must be a full supply of cheap material. Canada is now within nine days' run of the Irish coast; facility of transport is, consequently on the side of the enterprise; and if the flax-spinners and merchants of Belfast, and other seats of the manufacture, join with the Canadian Government in setting the thing afloat, the project cannot fail of success. So far as we can learn from merchants conversant with the