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**FLAX: A STUDY FOR THE POLITICAL
ECONOMIST.**

The writer of this, and of the article in the last number of the Journal, "On the Commercial Interest in Flax," after upwards of 20 years' practical experience in the cultivation of that crop in the north of Ireland, coupled with a study of its manufacture and the attention he has bestowed on it as a scientific subject, has, in his sojourn in Canada during the past year, been led to inquire minutely into the subject in relation to this Province; and by careful inquiry into what has been here done in the matter, and by personal inspection of the crop growing, as well as of its produce in its various stages of preparation and manufacture throughout the Upper Province, he has placed himself in a position to form an impartial and decided opinion, not hastily arrived at, on the subject.

Feeling as he does a peculiar interest in promoting and encouraging it, and convinced of its being adapted to the wants of Canada, he cannot conceal from himself the fact that the material produced here at present will only be profitable to the farmers so long as the present high prices are maintained; and that flax must soon cease to be extensively grown in Canada, unless prompt steps be taken to secure it as a staple crop and trade, by improving its quality. This is to be done by the importation of foreign seed—sowing a greater quantity of seed to the acre—and more skilfully preparing the fibre than can possibly be done by the process of dew rotting, now almost universally practised in this Province. Farmers and preparers of flax must learn to improve their mode of operations, else the cultivation of the plant will be unprofitable, and will be abandoned by the farmers. Private enterprize alone is not sufficient to attain the object—the government of Canada should give aid, as other governments have done in the matter.

The article on "the Commercial Interest in Flax" may be said to be merely an introductory chapter, on a subject of much interest, which involves the consideration of how it should be dealt with by the political economists of the Province.

They have duties to fulfill with regard to it of which they do not seem to be fully aware, simply because the importance of it has not presented itself to them in its true light. No doubt the subject was agitated several years ago, and led to enquiries being set on foot through Commissioners sent specially for the purpose to the British Islands and other European countries, and to the United States. The reports made by the Commissioners were not, at the time, deemed to attach such importance to the subject as to justify the interference of the Government; though subsequent experience has proved that had some expense been then gone to, the country would have derived at least some profit to remunerate them for the expense of their Commissioners in search of information. Since that time, more especially within the last few years, further enquiries have been made by Committees of the Legislative bodies, and information has been elicited which it is to be hoped may ultimately lead to the result of something substantial and practically useful being done by the Government of the Province. The Farmer looks to the Agricultural Societies; they lack means and appeal for them to the Government which approves of the object for which the aid is asked, but which, being composed of faithful trustees of the people, must ask the advice of the people's representatives before they consent to appropriate any of the public funds. Enquiries are made of Committees; dissolutions of Parliament—Recesses—and adjournments in their turn cause delays, but it is not likely that the matter can remain neglected much longer; its merits have been admitted by the Ministers of Agriculture in their reports of 1863 and 1864, and it only remains to be discussed whether it is entitled to any aid, and what the nature of that aid should be. It may be said that this is a matter in which farmers and commercial men should be left to themselves—that their own interest will cause them to do all that is necessary in the case. This might be so, were the benefit to be derived from it to extend no further than the merchant and farmer; but the advantages to be gained from the success of Flax cultivation and its manufacture would be a national profit. It is not merely that the failure of the wheat crop in Canada renders absolutely necessary the substitution of some other crop in its stead; it is not because flax is the most profitable crop that a farmer can grow, that gives it a claim on the interference and aid of the Government. It is because it is a means of developing the resources of the country, and of increasing the national wealth and prosperity by the profitable employment of its soil, climate, and existing population, and by attracting to the Pro-