

can be retted at a lower temperature, a longer period being required in that case. After the flax has been in the water for five days it should be examined once or twice daily to see if the right stage has been reached. If the flax stem when bent breaks across sharply and the outer fibre can be readily peeled off clean from the central woody core it is sufficiently retted. The test should be made about half way up the stem. When it is being taken out of the dam any adhering mud should be washed off. After removal from the dam it is set up on end to drain, after which it is spread on the grass to dry. It is possible in suitable weather to dry it without spreading by opening out the bundles partly and inclining them against a fence or low wooden rail. When quite dry it should be carefully stacked or housed.

Scutching.—This is the term applied to the separation of the fibre from the woody core. The machinery required is comparatively simple and consists of a "brake" and a "scutching stock." The former consists of grooved rollers between which the flax straw is passed and the hard woody core is crushed and broken into short lengths. The latter consists of a revolving wheel with wooden or iron blades which beat out the woody "shoves" from a handful of broken flax when held against them. A small oil engine is the most convenient source of power, but electric or water power, if obtainable, will do equally well. Scutching is generally carried on during the winter months and should only be done by an experienced workman.

Yield.—About two tons of dried flax straw with the seed on are considered an average yield per acre. The average yield of flax seed per acre for the whole of Canada for the five years from 1911 to 1915 was 11½ bushels, while the average yield in the province of Ontario where the crop was grown primarily for fibre was for the same period 16½ bushels per acre. With proper attention an average yield of 450 pounds of scutched fibre per acre should be obtained.

Prices.—The price of flaxseed at Winnipeg during November, 1915, ranged from \$1.62½ to \$1.89 per bushel. The price of flax fibre is at present the highest on record. In January, 1915, the price at Belfast, Ireland, ranged from \$434 to \$607½ per ton for Dutch flax and was \$369 per ton for Russian flax. The prices since that date have gone still higher.

General Considerations.—A farmer who has never grown flax for fibre should not attempt more than 1 to 2 acres at first. Probably not more than one-tenth, at most, of the cultivated area of the farm should be devoted to flax in any one year. It is a crop that requires very careful attention and three acres well handled may produce a greater profit than five acres damaged by weather or over-retting. At what stage a farmer can most profitably dispose of his crop must be largely determined by circumstances. If the members of his own family can assist, and a considerable part of the work can be done during the slack winter months his profit will obviously be the greater. All the work except scutching can be done on the farm. It should be possible for a number of farmers to co-operate in the erection of a scutching mill at some central point.

Fuller information on this subject will be found in an illustrated bulletin to be published shortly.