

Communications.

REPORT ON THE PRESENT STATE OF BRITISH AGRICULTURE,

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[Concluded from our last.]

Another great improvement which I saw, was on the Model Farm of the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, near Dublin. It consisted in having the out-houses, feeding-stalls, calf-pens, hog-pens, stables, &c. built round one yard common to them all. In the centre of this yard was a new large cistern, closely covered, into which drains from all the sheds and pens emptied themselves, thus giving a very large supply of urine from the stall-fed and other animals. This was drawn out in water-barrels, with perforated hose or tins, and allowed to fall on the plants, either turnips or mangold wurzel, or clover and grass, or grain, and was found to have as good an effect as a dressing of guano—the properties that the urine contains being as efficacious as those of guano, and not of dissimilar effect upon the crops. The sewerage of towns is also receiving a great deal of attention, as being likely to produce a manure equal to guano. Mr. J. T. Cooper, the analytical chemist, has reported upon it, and says that “plans for deodorizing and reducing sewerage to powder have hitherto failed, in consequence of the preservation of the ammonia not having been made a sufficient consideration.” But a Mr. Stotherd has lately taken out a patent for deodorizing sewerage, by which the ammonia and other volatile principles are entirely fixed and placed in a condition most eligible for the food of plants. In this consists the superiority of the invention—“The liquid portion, separated entirely from the grosser matters, passes off from the precipitate in the form of water, as clear as crystal, and free from colour.” Professor Way’s experiments have long since proved that the filtration of liquid manure through clay land is quite practicable. It is fully expected that the prodigious amount of rich material in the sewerage of large towns will in a very short time be brought into universal practical use for the benefit of the world, instead of being allowed, as hitherto, to be a source of great inconvenience and annoyance.

Having visited some of the finest flax growing districts in the north of Ireland, it struck me very

forcibly that the farmers of Canada might avail themselves of the immense profits which the proper cultivation of this crop gives to those who understand its culture and the processes required to render it marketable. That the soil and climate are adapted for its growth in both provinces, has been already ascertained by the breadth successfully cultivated for some years. In the Lower Province, the census of 1851 returns 1,189,018 lbs., as the produce of that year; and the linen manufactured from it, 929,249 yards. In the Upper Province, there are returned 59,680 lbs. of flax, and 14,711 yards of linen, quite sufficient to prove that neither soil nor climate are unsuitable for its cultivation. Taking this for granted, the next question is, How are we to get its cultivation extended, so as to make it an article of export? At present there is none grown except for home manufacture, and that is cleaned by the hand, by the families of the cultivators, at a great outlay of time and labor.

It is not probable that there are any private individuals who would enter so largely into its growth as to erect the necessary machinery on their own account solely. It will, therefore, require to be done by association of some kind, or the aid of some association. In Ireland and other countries, it has been thought wise policy to encourage its growth and cultivation by public aid, and, in the former country, a Royal Society has been formed and in operation now for a considerable time with that view. The best plan for promoting its growth is perhaps a difficult question in Canada, on account of the great distance and paucity of the parties who would be willing to undertake its cultivation for export, whilst as yet it continues, for that purpose at least, to be merely an experiment, and not ensuring a certain return of profit.

The present appears to be an excellent time for encouraging its growth in Canada as an article of export. In consequence of the war with Russia and the stoppage of flax from that country, the flax-mills in Scotland are going on short time, and the manufacturers having more orders than they can execute on account of this deficiency of supply, the Scotch farmers are taking measures for more extended cultivation of it, and the cautious Scotch farmer scarcely ever undertakes what is unprofitable.

The total annual import of flax from Russia, according to the last published return, was 1,226,258 cwt., about three-fourths of all the flax