

funds: and of *such* flax appears to have claims at the present time, for neither the Government nor any association in Canada, have yet given to flax any substantial mark of their favor, in any degree proportionate to its importance, or similar to what has been done in other countries, where by fostering care it has been established as one of their staple crops, and of the leading branches of their commerce and manufactures.

In the United States not only have the governments of the States of New York, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, lately used efforts to encourage it, but the Federal Government, by their Bureau of Agriculture, has warmly espoused the cause. France and other countries have carefully fostered the linen trade by high protective duties. In Russia, government officers strictly examine and classify the seed exported for sowing, and to this much of their success in establishing a high character for good sowing seed may be attributed. In Ireland the trade and cultivation of flax has for upwards of two centuries been encouraged by the Government, and has received many favors by grants of public money, bounties, and legislative enactments. But we are too far advanced in the age of free trade to advocate the imposition of high protective tariffs, or the bestowal of bounties for the encouragement of any branch of trade. There are other ways, however, by which the Government of Canada might aid and extend the cultivation of flax, without involving any financial loss. One of such ways would be by loans to township municipalities, or incorporated companies, to purchase machinery, to import foreign seed, and to employ practical instructors. Another way would be to make loans to private individuals for the erection of scutch mills, after the manner provided for in Ireland a few years ago to meet the difficulties then existing in many parts of that country, such as now exist in most parts of Upper Canada, from want of those indispensable auxiliaries. Grants should be made to the agricultural boards and associations to enable them to assist in the matter. The appropriation of a portion of the school funds to defray part of the expenses of practical instructions to farmers, would seem to be a fitting application of such funds. A board or association should be formed to which the care of the extension and improvement of flax cultivation should be specially assigned. The value of such an association has been proved to be very great, in the existence of the "Royal Flax Improvement Association of Ireland," by whose exertions it may justly be said that the present advanced state of the qualities of Irish flax is indebted. This association met with

great discouragement and difficulties in the early efforts of their instructors to overcome the prejudices of Irish farmers, who claimed to have inherited from their forefathers a skill in flax cultivation which they thought superior to any of "the new fangled systems, which might do very well in Belgium, but would not suit in Ireland," as they said; but, by persistent and persevering efforts, their prejudices were overcome, hints and suggestions of the instructors were taken, and a new school of flax growers was created among the farmers, producing flax equal to the best Belgian.

Instructions of this kind must be carried home to the fields of farmers in a practical way; theoretical instructions and scientific lectures may create an interest in the subject, and prompt many to try the experiment; and written essays are valuable in like manner, though with farmers they have not the weight they ought to have; and so many written instructions have been published on the subject that flax growers are often puzzled to understand them. What they want is teaching by practical men, with whom they can have an interchange of ideas on the subject, in their fields, at the various stages of the crop. This fact is well known, and has been acted on by some of the leading men in the business in this Province, who have been instrumental in bringing flax culture to its present extent in Upper Canada.

The proximity of the markets to the farmers in Ireland has been before alluded to, and from the opportunity afforded to farmers, hacklers, buyers and spinners to meet in crowds at such markets, immense advantages have been derived. Several hundreds of loads of flax are in these markets exposed to view as at an agricultural exhibition; each farmer sees his neighbour's flax, its perfections and imperfections, learns the value of it, hears the causes of the superiority or inferiority, and interchange their ideas and give their experience to each other, contributing to the information and improvement of all. There are in Canada many who have made up their minds that they are perfectly skilled in the cultivation of flax, but who are far behind the skill of the growers of the last few years in Europe. There are others who know but little of the modern systems, and yet will take upon themselves to assert that the systems now and hitherto in operation in Canada are the best—in fact the only ones suited to the country; and it is hard to say which of these is the most difficult class to deal with. There are, however, many who know the present system to be wrong, and are endeavouring to improve it; and there are not a few of the believers in the old system whose faith is shaken in it, when they hear