

The Commercial

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THE OUTLOOK FOR FLAX SEED.

Flax has suddenly come into prominence in Manitoba as an important crop. The area sown this year was enormously increased over any previous year, this no doubt being due to the very high price which ruled for flax last year, taken along with the very low price which ruled for wheat. Last year the flax area in Manitoba was about 30,000 acres only, while this year the area is placed at 82,500 acres. The crop last year, at an average yield of 12 bushels per acre, produced a total of 366,000 bushels. This year, with an average yield of 15 bushels per acre, the crop is estimated to be about 1,240,000 bushels.

This large increase in the area and quantity of the crop makes the question of prices a more important one in Manitoba than it has ever been before. The very high prices of last year could hardly be expected to prevail for two years in succession, and at present the price of flax seed is much lower than it was a year ago in the world's markets. The crop of flax seed in the United States was very small last year, having amounted to only about 7,500,000 bushels. To this fact was mostly due the high prices paid last year. The short supply was made up by importations to New York from India. The high prices also stimulated the sowing of flax in the United States last spring. In the state of Minnesota alone the area is said by some authorities to have been doubled this year. In the two Dakotas the area was also largely increased and the crop is a good one, so that it is estimated the flax crop of the United States will be the largest since 1891, which was about 19,000,000. The average annual flax crop of the United States is about 14,000,000 bushels, and the crop of 1891 was the largest ever produced. The flax crop of the United States is produced almost entirely in the northwestern states, the three states already named, with Iowa and Nebraska, produce the bulk of the crop. The only other important flax state is Kansas.

The price of flax seed at Chicago—the principal flax seed market in the United States—has ranged from 90c to \$1.00 per bushel lately, as compared with \$1.40 to \$1.50 per bushel a year ago. This will give an indication of the decline in values since last season. A considerable portion of the Manitoba crop was shipped to the United States last year. There is a duty of 20 cents per bushel on flax seed going into the United States. Deducting the duty and cost of freight to Chicago, the value of flax seed in Manitoba would be reduced to about 60 to 65c per bushel on a basis of Chicago prices. But as our flax seed is required for crushing here and in Eastern Canada, the price should not be governed by the value for export to the United States.

OUR DAIRY INDUSTRY.

It is pleasing to note that Manitoba dairy products have been so well received in outside markets as they have this year. Manitoba has this year for the first time fairly entered the arena as an exporter of butter and cheese, and the product sent out has met with even better success than could have been expected. While we did not expect and could not hope to compete with the choicest eastern goods right at the start, we have on the whole done fairly well. A recent report from Montreal says that a lot of Manitoba creamery butter sold there at the very top price obtained for the finest goods. This is something, indeed, to be proud of, and should stimulate other factories here to endeavor to attain like enviable results.

There never was any question as to the adaptability of the country for the manufacture of the finest dairy goods. The climate here is favorable for dairying, and our prairies afford rich grazing for cattle. The only questions were as to the skill of our operators, the completeness of our appliances for manufacture, and the system upon which they operated. As regards the skill of our dairymen, we no doubt have some thoroughly competent men, while a good many, no doubt, have something yet to learn. It is but natural to expect this in a new country. The efforts being made by the Dominion and provincial governments will certainly in time provide the education necessary, along with the practical experience being gained, to make all our dairymen thoroughly efficient in their work.

The second disadvantage, that of accommodation and appliances, has been a real one. The majority of our factories are new, and owing to the sparse settlement of our country they are obliged to operate on a small scale. A large portion of the butter and cheese exported was made in factories which were not established until late this present season. These factories will be in better shape to carry on operations another year, and there will no doubt be a general improvement in the appliances and accommodations available at the factories another season, for the carrying on of the industry.

The third disadvantage which we are supposed to labor under arises from the sparse settlement of the country, and refers more particularly to creameries. Owing to this sparse settlement, creameries are obliged to adopt the cream-gathering plan, which is certainly not the best plan of operating such industries. At the same time the results obtained have been very gratifying in many cases. While the system is not the model one, it has been shown that choice butter can be made by this system, where every care and precaution is taken to secure the best results. Under this plan, however, the factory is obliged to rely upon its patrons to a great extent, to secure desirable results. It is therefore necessary to instruct the patrons in the proper care of handling their milk and cream. If the farmers who send their cream to the factories will co-operate with the factories, so

as to keep their cream pure, sweet and clean, it will be found possible to make choice butter by this plan. The farmers should be as deeply interested in attaining the best possible results as the manufacturers of the butter, and no doubt they will readily appreciate the necessity for their co-operation in the work. In time no doubt many of the factories will be able to adopt the plan of creaming the milk at the factories, instead of being obliged to gather the cream as at present from the patrons.

The good results attained this season, under the disadvantages and drawbacks incident to the establishing of a new industry in a new and thinly settled country, indicate wheat we may expect in the future. That Manitoba is to become a great dairy as well as a great wheat country, is now evident. There is no class of goods in which quality counts for more than in dairy products. It is therefore necessary that every effort should be made to excel in the matter of quality, at the outset. Attention should be given to every little detail, such as the marking of the packages, mode of packing and every other feature which will in any way make our goods more presentable in the great markets to which it will be sent. Our factorymen are no doubt doing this, for only by constant vigilance in this direction can they hope to grin, and keep a reputation after it is made, for Manitoba dairy goods.

EXPENSE OF HARVESTING A BIG CROP.

The quantity of binder twine consumed in Manitoba this year is very great. The area under crops requiring twine is estimated at 1,862,296 acres. Estimating that three pounds of twine per acre were required, which is considered a moderate amount in view of the very heavy growth of straw this year, we would have 5,586,888 pounds of twine used. At an average cost to the farmer of 8 cents per pound, the amount expended for twine would be \$446,951. The customs returns of the customs port of Winnipeg show that 2,109,509 pounds of binder twine were imported this season up to the close of August, thus showing that United States manufacturers got quite a slice of the Manitoba trade this season, notwithstanding the very close margin on which twine is sold. The Patrons of Industry purchased their twine from a United States factory, and this helped to swell the amount of imported twine very considerably, though The Commercial is informed they could have bought to as good advantage at home.

The cost of wages is another important consideration in harvesting a big crop. Nothing like a satisfactory estimate can be made of the amount paid in wages to save the present crop in Manitoba. One estimate made in the official crop bulletin, said that 6,000 extra men were required to harvest the crop. Allowing that these men cost on an average \$30 per month, including the cost of their keep, and that they are employed for three months, we would have the sum of \$540,000 paid in wages during the present