

The Company now operating the Berthier beet-sugar factory undertook the affair when all hopes of ever resuscitating the business seemed lost for ever. The failure first of Coaticook then of Farnham, then of Berthier seemed to point out that it was impossible to make beet sugar profitably in this country. A more close examination of the problem, however, revealed to them the real causes of previous failures. To begin with it was discovered that in no instance had a man with a thorough practical knowledge of the business been at the head of affairs; that in many cases deliberate frauds had been practised on the farmers, dishonest agents inducing them to cultivate beets in large areas in unsuitable soil for the sake of commissions; further a bad seed had frequently been furnished them. Added to this was blunder after blunder committed in the treatment of the beets after their reception at the factory.

It is safe to say that the whole industry would now be in a flourishing condition had proper precautions been used in preserving the beets at West Farnham in the fall of 1881. Over 7,000 tons were delivered on the grounds, and owing to lack of knowledge on the part of the managers, the majority rotted before they could be manufactured. In short it became clear after careful investigation that no radical difficulties stood in the way of making a great success of what had hitherto been a failure. Those who originally bought the factory at the sheriff's sale in October 1886 entered into partnership with Mr. Wilfrid Skaife who for several years was engaged in the beet-sugar business in Europe and who had made a special study of the matter in Russia where the conditions are very similar to those existing in Canada. It was determined to face the difficulties great as they were and work was begun on August the 14th, 1887. The Company was encouraged a good deal by the prospect of a bonus voted by the Quebec Government in 1886 and by the fact that the Dominion Government had, by an Order in Council cancelled its claim for unpaid duty on the machinery on the payment of \$7500 down and on condition that the factory be in full and complete operation in November 1887. In as much as it was manifestly impossible to begin operations that year, this term was extended by a subsequent Order-in-Council to November 1888.

Immediately on Mr. Skaife taking charge, work was begun among the farmers and continued without intermission for the period of 15 months, that is, until all the beets were delivered in October 1888. All this time a number of agents were at work, travelling from parish to parish and from house to house, first trying to induce the farmers to give the beets, another trial and afterwards teaching them how to cultivate them and keeping them up to their work. It was found advisable in several instances to bring from considerable distances men in whom farmers in different parishes had confidence. It was also soon seen that operations had to be carried on over a very large field, for the mistrust of the farmers was deeply rooted and widely spread. The agents worked all along the line of the Canadian Pacific, from Ste-Anne de la Pérade to Lachute, also along both banks of the St. Lawrence from Dorval to Sorci and in the valley of the Richelieu as far as St-Hilaire. Forty-two parishes in all were visited and over two thousand five hundred farmers seen. Everywhere was the cry: We know that beets pay better than any thing else, but we were cheated before and we will not risk any more money. By the dint of great exertions however a certain number in most of the parishes were induced to try once more, and as a guarantee of good faith, money was advanced at the rate of \$10 an acre to all who would grow three acres or over. The vast majority engaged to grow small areas, from one eighth to half an acre, which subsequently multiplied greatly the difficulties of reception.

Mr. Skaife went to Europe and bought the best seed to be had, and this was distributed at the rate of 16 lbs. to the acre to over a thousand farmers. In the spring, machines for sowing and weeding beets were widely distributed, and the agents of the Company went everywhere with them and gave practical lessons in the working of them. Further the Company rented land at St-Charles, on Richelieu river, in order to stimulate the farmers in that vicinity and to teach them the best methods of cultivation. Printed instructions were distributed every where, and no trouble or expense was spared which might tend towards the success of the crop. As a rule the farmers were most anxious to learn and expressed themselves as astonished by the trouble taken by the Company, also declaring that had former companies done likewise, the results would have been vastly different.

Up to the beginning of August crop promised well both for quality and quantity, and great hopes were entertained of a profitable year. But then began a season of continued wet weather which lasted until the frost came and the result of which was most disastrous. Such a season has never been known, ground never having been dry since August the 13th. It is precisely at this time that the beets require warmth, just as do grapes which also suffered this year in loss of sugar. The consequence to the factory was that the beets were not in a fit condition to be manufactured, only those grown with special care by the Company being ripe; and therefore the greatest possible trouble was experienced in the boiling of the liquor in the factory. The analysis showed that had the formation of the sugar in the beets not been arrested by the continual bad weather, a very high quality of root would have been produced, which has indeed been confirmed by very many previous experiments with beets in Canada. Another consequence of the wet season to the Company was the absolute necessity of paying in hard cash for an immense quantity of dirt, and subsequently paying freight on the same. It would have disgusted the farmers forever to have subtracted the real proportion of dirt from the weight of beets in as much as the difficulties they had to contend with in hauling them over bad roads were very great. It was thought better to lose the difference rather than the custom; but it cost a very considerable sum of money. As may well be imagined, the reception of the beets at so many different points, the weighing of each little lot, the agents' commissions amounted to a very considerable sum per ton of beets. All payments were promptly and liberally made; often it was necessary to pay for each load as it came in. It was a very dear experience, but a great result has been obtained; for the confidence of the farmers has been gained and the old feeling of mistrust wiped out. Further, the farmers have pronounced the crop to be a paying one as a general rule and a large number consider it more profitable than any other; and it must be noted here that the yield per acre this year was necessarily small as the beets lacked that solidity which they acquire in a warm season.

That the beets can be profitably turned into sugar in ordinary years is clear from the results of the work last fall. In spite of the greatest trouble being experienced with machinery which had been badly put up at first and which had lain idle for years to its great detriment, the company was able to manufacture a very high grade of raw sugar for a third of the price it cost before, by means of new and improved methods. A sample sent to honorable Minister of Customs at Ottawa was sent by him to the Government experts for analysis. It polarised 95.1 degrees, and the honorable gentleman expressed himself both surprised and pleased at its bright color and good quality generally.

Given the beets, and the industry will grow to be an immense one.