

FLAX CULTURE.

The soil and climate of Canada is admirably adapted for the growth of Flax, and might if proper steps were taken, form a heavy item among the exports of the country. We see no reason why Canadian soil would not produce flax as well and much better, than the worn out lands of Germany. Many may not be aware of the vast amount of specie sent out from Ireland annually, to purchase the raw material. Last year, before a committee of the House of Commons, which sat upon the export and import questions, it was ascertained that 80,000 tons of flax had been brought over from the continent to Ireland, at a cost in money of six millions of pounds sterling, which would average £75 sterling per ton. This fact would appear almost incredible, but when the extent of the Irish linen manufactures are taken into consideration all doubts on the subject would be set aside. In Belfast alone, there are upwards of forty mills in full operation, some of which, work up 50 tons a week.

The price of flax like most other products, depend entirely on the quality of the article. The range of prices vary from £60 to £140 sterling per ton. The latter price is frequently paid for the best quality of Belgian flax.

There is much said about sending the redundant population of Great Britain out to the Canadas, and but little is said or done in placing the emigrant in such a position that he may earn a competent living for himself and family. We humbly recommend the attention of government to this subject, and if upon due consideration it be thought worthy of patronage, we trust some steps may be taken, by which a series of experiments may be made on a scale which will at once show the profits and loss of the business. The settlements which the Government have formed, by given free grants of land, in the neighbourhood of Owen's sound on the south shore of lake Huron, are at present in rather a languishing condition, owing principally, to the fact, that much of the time of the settlers is spent in comparative idleness, in consequence of the great depth of snow in winter—if flax and hemp culture were introduced in that settlement, and proper information given them as it regards the cultivation, retting and dressing, and preparation for the British market, there can be no doubt but they would soon become comfortable in their circumstances, if not wealthy.

The Canada Company having large blocks of excellent lands in almost every district in Western Canada, and in some portion of the Eastern sections of the Province, would no doubt materially benefit the country, and themselves in the end, by using every possible exertion in furthering the culture of flax. From specimens of their liberality and devotedness to the cause of the improvement of the agriculture of this Province, which have lately come under our notice, we would naturally infer that some immediate and efficient action would be taken by their enterprising and patriotic Agent of this city on this very important subject, by awarding premiums to their settlers, on the best specimens of water rotted flax.

Agricultural Societies, one and all, should take up this subject with spirit, and enlist in their ranks as far as possible gentlemen of fortune, merchants, and tradesmen. The old style of Agricultural Societies merely meeting once a year to divide the liberal grant of money which has been so bountifully granted them by the Government,

without evincing any spirit of emulation for useful improvement, should in this enlightened age be obsolete. We assure them that their exertions cannot be better applied, than in the encouragement of the growth of flax. If our last sixteen months exertions, for the promotion of a better system of agriculture in this important colony, had been patronized to the extent we anticipated, we would, this season, have made a number of highly interesting experiments, which would have cleared many doubts entertained by skeptics on the above subject as well as other branches of husbandry which would have proved clearly that Canada is as susceptible of an improved system of agriculture being successfully and profitably introduced, as any country in the universe. This improved system, however, would be widely different from much of the trash and nonsense written, on the subject of an improved agriculture. We sometimes fear that we have entered the field too soon as an innovator or rather extirpated of the old and semi-barberous system of farming, which has been cherished from time immemorial, and even practiced in this age of books and learning, to its fullest extent in some portions of the Province, this problem, will, however, be solved by the close of the present year. The experiments in question would only add another serious item, to the bill of costs, which we have already subjected ourselves to, by placing such implicit confidence in the good sense of our native and adopted countrymen, and will, therefore, have to be delayed on our part until the public support us to the extent, which would warrant our entering into such a weighty undertaking.

SOIL AND ROTATION.—With careful cultivation, Flax may be grown upon any soil, but its quality will much depend on the preparation of the land for a crop. A pervous subsoil, with a dry, deep, rich and arable loam, will be found the best for the plant to thrive, which quality of land, is abundant in most of Canada. The land should never be manured for flax, but should receive it with the preceding crop. Oats, wheat, and barley, then flax, is an excellent rotation for the flax.

PREPARATION OF THE GROUND AND SOWING.—The best preparation for flax is to plough the land deep in the early part of autumn, and by throwing it up into high ridges, it will get the benefit of the action of the frost and air; and will also be dry in the early part of the spring, so that it may receive two ploughings and harrowings to pulverise the soil and kill the weeds; the first ploughings should be as early as possible, so as to admit of at least a fortnight's interval, and the harrowing each time, to be just before the ploughing; and it would also be of much service to use a heavy roller previous to each ploughing. The seed should be sown broad-cast, at the rate of two bushels and a half per acre, which on most soils, if prepared as above, will ensure a thick crop, which is of the utmost importance to give the fibre the desired fineness; and will prevent the plant from branching out and being over-loaded with seed. The soil for flax should have the appearance of an onion bed previous to sowing the seed; and the seed should be covered very lightly with a bush, or a very light pair of harrows. It would also be advisable to give the previous crop a double portion of manure,—we mention this fact for the benefit of those who may go largely into the business—so that they may prepare their lands in the best possible manner; if the manure be ploughed in with the stubble in the autumn, the same end will be accomplished. The fine suckers and roots of flax will strike into the ground upwards of a

foot; therefore the soil must be deep and well-tilled to admit them and ensure the plant thriving well. If the soil be prepared at all well, and the seed sown in good season, and at the rate above, no injury can be sustained to the crop from weeds; as vegetation in this country is so rapid, that the plants would cover the ground before the seeds, producing weeds would vegetate.

The seed from flax would be worth more than an average crop of oats—we may safely say that it would be worth three pounds per acre, for the oil it contains; and would be found the best food in use for feeding cattle, to be mixed with oats and peas, and then ground—this food is also very valuable for milk cows.

We see no reason why this matter should not be entered into with spirit. If men of influence would only set the example, the result would astound even England—and a new and healthy order of things would be the natural consequence. For our part we are quite tired of the dull music of *hard times*, and we hope to be the feeble instrument in effecting an entire revolution in the agriculture of the province, which will place us in a natural position as a colony towards the parent state. The British North American colonies are the very best customers for British manufactured goods; but they are only good customers, so far as they are able to meet their engagements for those goods: if flax and hemp culture were entered into with spirit, it would be found that the exports would in a few years equal the imports—then, and not till then, will the tune of hard times be changed. If the exports of a colony equalled its imports, the banks would then be enabled to accommodate farmers and mechanics, and retail merchants, as well as who'sale:—and the money brought into the country by emigrants, and for the payment of troops, and *et cetera*, would remain in the colony; and capital would accumulate in abundance.

There is a great amount of commercial distress in this country; and we apprehend that the worst is not realized. One source of this distress, has been occasioned from the fact, that the producing classes have not turned their time and talents to the best account. Much valuable time has been lost, and much capital badly expended; which will be shown in due time so clearly and practically, that we will not be easily misunderstood.

If the cultivation of hemp and flax, should be considered worthy of notice by the "powers that be"—and some immediate and efficient measures should be put into practice to carry out the design, by either forming hemp and flax societies, or by respectable premiums, or by giving assurance that a certain and profitable market would be opened; and, also, that every encouragement would be given for its growth:—the effect would be, that hundreds of tons would be raised, which would give constant and profitable employment for the settlers and farmers of every class and description, and there would then be no occasion for any to complain for the want of employment.

Flax after being retted, broken, and scutched, is worth seven pence half-penny per pound, for the purpose of making ropes:—this price is given by a rope maker in this city—and it commands even a higher price in Kingston.

Further directions will be given during the summer months, on the retting and dressing, and preparing for market; and we kindly solicit information from any who feel competent for the task.

The great secret of human happiness is this, never suffer your energies to stagnate.