COMMITTEE ROOM 46,
HOUSE OF COMMONS, TUESDAY, 8th June, 1897.

The Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization met this day at 10.45 a.m., Mr. Bain, Chairman, presiding.

BY THE CHAIRMAN,—I may say for the information of the committee before we proceed that it was deemed desirable to call this meeting for this morning instead of Wednesday. You are aware that the House proposes to adopt morning sittings, and that except by special permission, it is not allowed to us to meet during the sittings of the House. We have with us this morning, by re-call, Mr. James Fletcher, Entomologist and Botanist to the Dominion Experimental Farms, who will make a short statement to us of the range of his observations and duties during the past year.

Mr. FLETCHER,—Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen: The work in my department during the past year has been in connection with injurious insects, the eradication and control of weeds and the carrying on of some experiments upon which I have reported somewhat on several occasions in regard to native and imported grasses. I spoke at the last meeting when I had the honour of appearing before the committee, of the success which had attended the introduction of Brome grass into Canada and how the reports received nine years ago of the satisfactory nature of this grass had all been confirmed. As a matter of fact, I think it is not saying too much when it is stated that this grass has solved to a very large degree the question of providing fodder and hay in the North-west Territories and Manitoba, even in the arid districts. Its value in the eastern provinces will not be so great, because there is not the same need for a useful, succulent grass. In the east we have many grasses which will give us good returns if proper mixtures are made and they are treated properly and the meadows are not left too long in grass. But in the North-west and Manitoba the success of Brome grass has been a matter of very great importance. During last summer in Manitoba I saw many large fields of this grass; on one particular farm there were about fifty acres of it, which were producing a very heavy crop of hay, far heavier than any other crop that had been grown there. In the dry regions of British Columbia where it has been tried, and upon land with some alkali, it has shown itself to possess special value. It also succeeds well on low, rich lands where, of course, almost everything will grow, but the fact that it will succeed better than any native grass and better than any crops which have been sown there for fodder purposes, is additional proof of its importance. As long ago as nine years, Mr. Routledge wrote me from Virden, Man., that from his own experience of one year, if it continued to succeed as it did then, it would entirely settle the question of providing a large supply of succulent feed and hay when it was required. During the present year, our collection of grasses at the Experimental Farm has been very much reduced in number, on account of the severe winter that we have passed through. During the last winter we have lost more kinds of grass fodder plants and other plants than in any other winter that we have experienced. Plants which have been in the beds for eight or nine years were entirely killed. One plant known as Wagner's Wood Vetch that had stood for nine years, giving us good crops, was killed out, the roots being entirely destroyed for two feet down. Some other new plants were also unable to stand the winter, but they could not be compared with others already tested because these latter plants were likewise killed. The beds have been refilled, and now we have in them over 200 kinds of fodder plants either newly sown or newly planted or received from botanical gardens and from students in different parts of America. We have now at the Experimental Farm, either growing or which have been grown and records kept of them nearly all the varieties of fodder plants which have been advertised and others which have not been advertised, such as our native grasses. The one perhaps of the greatest value amongst the native grasses is that