

tent to the higher price which prevails for the raw fibre. The flax industry has been a difficult one to handle. It has been difficult all down through the ages. It dates back many, many years, in fact two thousand years ago, when flax was produced by methods very much similar to those which prevail to-day. I have pointed out that the industry is one of very ancient origin, and if I may be permitted to draw the attention of the House to the historical side of the facts, I trust I may be pardoned, because I feel that the subject is one of very great interest and one of very great importance, especially to the district in which I live, and as I will be able to show to the members of this House, of very great interest to almost every district within the Dominion. The cultivation of flax and manufacture of its fibre is the most ancient of all textile industries dating back to the early period of the world's history, very distinct traces of its existence during the stone age have been preserved to the present day. The great value of the plant has been known and appreciated for thousands of years, but in matter of preparation generally it stands almost where it was 3,000 years ago. It is said that it was a well established industry in Egypt at the dawn of the Christian era. Three thousand years ago the Phoenicians devoted much attention to cultivation of the plant, and subsequently the Greeks and Romans made the working of flax fibre a part of the household duties. Hon. members who are familiar with the volume of Sacred-Writ, (I hope all are) will remember that one of the plagues sent to Pharaoh and his people and referred to in the book of Exodus was the plague of hail, and it is there recorded "that the flax and the barley was smitten, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was bolled" the wheat and the rye were not smitten; for they were not grown up.

I call the attention of the House to the fact that much the same methods of cultivating flax prevail to-day as those which were followed three thousand years ago. In the growing of this crop almost the same system of rotation is followed; that is a flax crop succeeds wheat or barley. In the book of Joshua it is recorded that Joshua sent out two spies to view the land, even Jericho, and the king sent his men to search for them. They came to the house of a woman named Rahab. She took the spies up to the roof of her house, and hid them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. The flax was spread out

on the roof, exposed to the weather, and retted in the same way as it is now spread out on the lawn, or on the grass in the fields, exposed to the rain and in this way retted.

I have further references to the historical side of this question, but it is too late to elaborate on them. I wish to draw the attention of the House, however, to the fact that in bringing gifts in those olden days they always associated fine linen with gold, silver and precious metals. All through the Holy Book we find frequent mention of flax and linen.

It is apparent that the flax industry is of very ancient origin, and thousands of years ago people manufactured the finest and best grades of linen. This in itself is not so much a matter of amazement as is the fact that throughout the centuries there should be so little advance in the methods of preparing a commodity that was classed amongst the most valuable in merchandise. It practically stands to-day very much the same as it stood over three thousand years ago, in as much as the method of retting is generally substantially the same as it was when linen was first manufactured by the Egyptians, and this notwithstanding the fact that the preparation of flax for the market is a highly scientific and technical process.

The history of flax in Canada dates back about three hundred years. Records show that the earliest settlers on this continent brought with them the seed of the flax plant. In the year 1617 the first farmer who landed in the province of Quebec occupied and cleared that piece of land where now stands the court house of the city which bears that name, built himself a cabin and commenced farming. Some thirty or forty years later, about thirty-five miles below the city of Quebec on the north shore of the St. Lawrence, at a place called St. Joachim, was established a sort of experimental farm, and on this farm one of the principal crops, in an experimental way, was flax. Professor Grisdale, Director of our Dominion Experimental Farms, referring to this incident at the flax convention held in London, Ont., on the 28th of February, 1917, said that he had had the pleasure of visiting this old district in the autumn of 1916 and had come across some French farmers from whom he learned that they had been growing flax not merely for the grain but for the fibre ever since they could remember; further, that there was a history or legend in their family, that this was some old flax brought over by the