

GAINING VALUABLE EXPERIENCE.

Grave doubts have frequently been expressed as to the advisability of establishing or endeavoring to establish large farming enterprises in this country. Bonanza farming experiments as a rule have not proved successful in the west, and the last year or two has witnessed the winding up of a good many of these enterprises which were started in Dakota only a few years ago. At the time the Sir John Lester Kaye scheme was first announced, for the establishing of a mammoth farming and ranching enterprise in this country, many reasonable arguments were urged against the undertaking. Aside, however, from the consideration of the scheme in a general sense as a paying investment, this country is likely to gain some valuable experience resulting from the enterprise of the management of this farm in various ways. Last week reference was made in these columns to the export shipments of dressed meats which are to be made by the Kaye farming company. This is an experiment which will be watched with much interest, and which should be of great value to the country, if it is shown by practical experience that it can be successfully worked. Another undertaking of this company is in the dairy line. Cream from the different farms controlled by the company located along the Canadian Pacific Railway is to be shipped each day by rail to a creamery at a central point, where the butter will be manufactured. If this scheme proves successful, it might be imitated to some extent in other parts of the country.

Another experiment of this farming company is of great importance to the country. This is the growing and manufacturing of flax. About 250 acres of land was sown to flax last year, and an expert who has been secured to examine the product, says it is of excellent quality for such purposes as the manufacture of twine. It is proposed to manufacture binding twine from this flax. The intention is to erect a flax mill next season and sow about 2,000 acres of flax. Sir John Lester Kaye, in an interview recently with a representative of the *Toronto Empire*, stated that he would recommend the directors of his company to undertake the growing and manufacture of flax on an extensive scale, as he believed it would be one of the great industries of the west. The flax grown last season was sown in small patches on each of the company's eleven farms, which are located at points along the Canadian Pacific railway, between Regina and Calgary. On each of these farms it is said the flax did very well, though the season was not considered a favorable one. The distance between the two points named is about 400 miles, so that the successful cultivation of flax on the different farms of the company would indicate that flax growing could be engaged in throughout all this great extent of country.

The growth and manufacture of flax has been frequently advocated as a promising industry for the prairies of western Canada. Those familiar with the requirements of the industry, claim that the conditions existing here are very favorable to the cultivation of a fine quality of

flax, and that the advantages for the manufacture of the article are also good. It is stated on good authority that several varieties of flax grow wild in Manitoba. Notwithstanding all that has been written upon the subject, heretofore little if any effort has been made to practically test the question of flax cultivation and manufacture. The Mennonite settlers in southern Manitoba have for years grown a considerable quantity of flax, and it has been found with them a fairly profitable crop. They have, however, only grown the flax for the seed, and not for the manufacture of the fibre. The linseed oil mill at Winnipeg is supplied with flax seed purchased from the Mennonites, and some quantity is also purchased by buyers from the United States and Ontario. The manufacture of flax fibre will be a new industry for the country, and everyone will hope that Sir Lester Kaye's company may find it a profitable investment. If it can be made to work for binder twine, it will be a great thing for western Canada. A large sum of money is now annually expended for binder twine, and to grow and manufacture this product at home is indeed something worth while striving for. Manitoba will have a crop acreage next season, in wheat, oats and barley alone of over 1,000,000 acres, which with a good crop would require about two pounds of twine per acre. At the retail price of twine prevailing last year, this would represent an expenditure of \$200,000 for binding twine. A considerable quantity of twine is also used in the territories to the west of Manitoba, and the requirements are increasing fast every year. It is therefore very desirable in the interest of the west that this article be produced at home, if possible.

PAYING FOR DEAD-BEATS.

During the past summer and fall there has been a great deal of complaint on the part of consumers, as to the high prices charged for meats by the Winnipeg city butchers. The difference between the wholesale and retail prices of meats did seem to be out of proportion. Cattle were selling at from two to three cents per pound and even under the lower figure for the greater portion of the season, and sometimes two and a half to two and three quarter cents per pound live weight were the best prices which could be realized. Choice dressed beef by the side or carcass was obtainable at five cents per pound. But when it came to purchasing at retail, all good cuts sold at from ten to fifteen cents per pound, as to the choice of cuts. These retail prices seem to be out of proportion to the wholesale cost, and made it appear the consumers had just cause for complaint.

The butchers on the other hand claim that they have not been making money, and indeed so far as can be learned, it does not appear that the Winnipeg butchers have been getting rich very fast. A good many of them have barely held their own, while others have apparently gone behind. To all appearance the retail meat business in Winnipeg, has not returned a profit to the dealers in proportion to the margin which they have on their goods.

The butchers claim they cannot sell on a smaller margin and live, and apparently they are not prospering in a greater proportion than dealers in other lines of trade. There is evidently a leakage somewhere, and that leakage is "credit." The city butchers have done a large credit business, and they have lost heavily in consequence. Their big margins have been swallowed up in bad accounts. They have been compelled to charge a big margin on their meats to cover the losses of credit business, and even with these big margins they claim that they have not as a class made much money. Some have even lost money.

The question is, should the cash consumer be compelled to pay high prices to cover the inevitable losses of the credit sales? It seems an injustice to the honest cash customer, and it certainly is such. The only way to remedy the evil would appear to be to sell only for cash at a fair margin; or if a credit business must be done, to charge a much larger margin on such sales. The extra price for credit would not fall on the "poor, hard working man." The working-man, as a rule, is the best cash customer, and often the best pay when he buys for credit. It is the would-be-somebodies in society—the tin-pot aristocracy—who are the undesirable customers, and who are a great deal better at buying than they are in paying. Under the present system, the working-man and others who are compelled to pay high prices for meats, to cover the losses of credit business, are simply paying for the meat consumed by these dead-beats of society, as well as what they consume themselves. This puts the system in a nut-shell.

The result of the high meat prices has been to drive the consumers to purchasing from farmers on the market. This they could not do during the summer and fall, as they could only purchase in quantities on the market, and the meat would spoil before they could use it. But as soon as cold weather set in, consumers have gone to the market and bought beef from farmers, by the quarter or side at from four to six cents per pound, thus getting it at a great saving over butchers' prices. The butchers, therefore, have lost a large portion of their trade for the winter season. The consumers are obliged to pay cash for their purchases from farmers, and moreover, they are obliged to buy in considerable quantities, not less than a quarter of beef at a time. The fact that they pay cash to farmers, shows that a considerable portion of the public would pay cash to butchers. Now, if the butchers could work their business, or a portion of it, on a cash basis, accepting a smaller margin of profits for cash, it is not likely that the cash purchasing public would buy so largely from farmers during the winter season. The majority of consumers would prefer to buy their meat as they require it, instead of buying in quantities, if it were not for the great difference in price. They would also prefer to buy from regular dealers, in which case they could return an article if found to be of inferior quality, or not as represented. When, however, the difference in price is so great, they will take the risk of purchasing an inferior article, or load themselves up with more than they require, rather than pay the high retail prices.