

place in a time of adversity, or face to face with problems that far outweigh questions of yearly revenue, or which, indeed, may have no connection with commerce at all, may view this subject in a wholly different light. Meantime, the commercial aspect of the case appears to be largely influencing public opinion in the colony, and we cannot blame the islanders for taking a restricted view of federation, when Canadian public men with wider experience have taken such a narrow view of this country's relations with Newfoundland in the past.

Many Newfoundlanders realize that the industrial birth of the colony dates from the advent about six years ago of a firm of Canadians, the Reid Bros., of Montreal, who built the colony's railway and gave a chance for its mines and factories. Previous to that time, the one great industry was the fisheries. What one Canadian firm has so well started can be expanded by other Canadian firms, and our capitalists who have hitherto been putting money into enterprises in South America, Cuba, Mexico, and the West Indies, might well turn their attention to this island where investments would be safe from political disturbances, and where the people are of our own race and of an industrious hardy character.

Meantime has the Canadian Government no offer of preference or of reciprocity to make towards Newfoundland, while the question of the colony's fishery negotiations with the United States are still unsettled?

Sir Robert Bond, the Premier, while opposed to confederation with Canada, pointed out in an interview in London the other day that the United States while getting special privileges in Newfoundland in the fisheries regulations, is taxing, almost to a prohibitive degree, Newfoundland products that go to the United States, and said that Newfoundland could not let this question stand open forever. He hinted at a preferential tariff with Canada. Such a tariff would ultimately be of great advantage to both countries, and the Canadian Government should send a commission of four or five broad-gauge men to St. John's, to negotiate a commercial treaty or preferential tariff in such a spirit as will make amends for the follies of the past.

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## THE FLAX INDUSTRY IN CANADA.

In another part of this issue will be found the third of a series of papers on flax manufacturing in Canada. In these papers the writer considers it necessary to recall the experiences and failures in linen manufacturing here at the time of the Civil War. These failures and the causes that led to them are forgotten by the present generation. That Canada contains several hundred millions of acres upon which it is possible to grow flax of good quality, and that we now import linen manufactures to the value of over \$2,000,000 a year, are two big facts that are highly alluring to a man who looks at the surface without going into the details of a manufacturing process. As a subject upon which to build a prospectus it is more enticing than Colonel Sellers' eye-water as pictured in Mark Twain's "Gilded Age." It reminds us of the enterprise that was started about

forty years ago in Manitoba for making buffalo hair into cloth. In those days of roaring sport the prairies were dotted with the carcasses of slaughtered buffalo, and one of the Red River settlers, who doubtless knew something of woollen manufacturing before Mr. Fielding had discovered the preferential method of building up a Canadian woollen trade, conceived the idea of starting a buffalo wool factory. He proposed to engage Indians to scout the plains, gathering the wool which remained after the flesh and hides of the deceased bison had decayed, and that this wool should be brought into Fort Garry and woven into cloth. It was proved that the wool would make a warm and substantial fabric, and the scheme seemed so feasible that a company was forthwith organized, and machinery spinners, weavers and dyers were imported, and the factory started with joyful anticipations. But the proceeds of the first "clip" of wool—it one can apply the term to picking the tufts around the bleached bones of the buffalo—were spent by the Indians in potent draughts of fire water, and no further wool-gathering would they do till they were driven by necessity. Meantime, the factory had to close down till fresh supplies could be had, and when the supplies within a day's journey or so of the factory were exhausted, the Indians refused altogether to collect more wool. As the occupation did not pay the white men, the factory closed down finally amid the drunken revels of the mill hands, and so ended the buffalo woollen factory of Red River.

So it was with the pioneer linen mills of Ontario. They had not realized that the existence of their industry depended on regular and sufficient supplies of a raw material which was beyond their own control. They could no more compel the farmer to grow flax and furnish it in the shape they required than the promoters of the buffalo wool factory could compel the Indians to gather their raw material as needed.

It would be a pity if the present linen enterprises were started without a full appreciation of the fact that no native Canadian flax industry can be established without complete co-operation between the growers and the manufacturers from the start. As pointed out in the article, the conditions are similar to the beet root sugar industry, in which two serious failures have already been recorded in Ontario through failure to secure sufficient supplies from the farmer. The promoters of these new ventures should understand that for the manufacture of linen fabrics the fibre from flax that is grown primarily for seed, as at present raised in Canada, is practically useless except for coarse stuff, and that if it is to be grown primarily for fibre, with the seed as a by-product, it will have to be grown at first under instructions from those skilled in the business in Ireland or Europe. It can certainly be done if the growers have the patience and perseverance. This can best be accomplished by Government co-operation and systematic experiments, which will necessarily extend over several seasons before any large area can be successfully devoted to flax raising for fibre purposes. It is a striking fact that the world's area under flax culture has been steadily declining for years in spite of the indirect efforts of the linen trade to increase it. Russia has become the world's chief source of supply in flax as the United States