

The length of our winters causes a cessation of much out-door work, and throws out of employment vast numbers of its population, whose labours might be profitably employed in various branches of manufactures, during a period of the year now spent in idleness, consuming the earnings of other seasons. By providing such employment in winter, abundance of labourers would be kept in the country available for assisting farmers in the hurried work of the short spring and summer seasons. The farmers complain of a want of labourers in spring and harvest—the labourer complains of a want of employment throughout the winter; and it is fearful to contemplate the consequences of several months spent by the working population of Canada, especially in its cities, towns and villages, in perfect idleness, leading to want and perhaps to vice and crime. The only effectual cure for this admittedly existing evil is to employ this population in manufactures, and of such, flax stands foremost for this purpose.

Breaking, scutching, heckling, spinning and weaving, and other works of minor details in flax, would employ multitudes of males and females of all ages with healthful, cheerful in-door work.

The great advantages of this kind of employment have shown themselves, especially where young children and aged men and women in Ulster, unfit for any other work, find profitable employment in this branch of industry. During the winter, when out-door labour cannot be performed, the men weave; and not only the men, but young girls and women find employment on the loom in their own houses, thus enabling them also to look after their families and household affairs; whilst in factories and mills thousands of small girls find constant work in the spinning of yarn.

Whether we look for employment of the rustic or city population of Canada, we can in this find it. Any one who has made it his business to study the census tables, and to enquire into the state of the population of the towns and cities of Canada, cannot fail to observe that they contain large numbers of unemployed persons, sufficient to supply numerous factories throughout the winter; and there is little doubt but that if flax was abundant and of a quality sufficiently good, capitalists would soon be found erecting such factories as would afford the required employment.

Some will perhaps say that flax of a better quality than now produced cannot be grown in the country—there can be no greater error. The farmers have only to sow a better quality of imported seed, and sow it thicker, and they will have crops equal to those of any other country; but

that will be only one step in the direction of producing good fibre fit for manufacturing purposes—they must improve their system of treating and preparing their flax. Dew rotted flax will never produce fine fibre, to attain which other processes must be resorted to under the direction of persons of experience in the practical details—mere theory will be of little use at this stage of the operations. The preparation by more modern processes will of course cost more, but the value of it will be more than proportionately increased.

The system of thin sewing, almost universally adopted in Canada, must lead to the inevitable consequence of growing short branchy flax, which may yield a supply of seed for the oil crusher, but can only produce fibre coarse in quality, short in quantity, and less remunerative to the farmer.

If at the approaching Provincial Exhibition it is found that good flax has been produced extensively this year, and that the government will give any pledge for encouraging the enterprise during the next few years—it will no doubt be found that capitalists will engage in the business—importing foreign seed and erecting factories for the preparation and manufacture of the fibre; but to induce them to do this the government must step forward and furnish every possible encouragement, and also in the payment of small salaries to local flax instructors.

It is to be hoped that the Minister of Agriculture will be enabled to be present at the forthcoming Provincial Exhibition, and that in the meantime he will give the subject the consideration it deserves. His recent visit to the Exhibition in Dublin, and the opportunities thus afforded him of acquiring a knowledge of the advantages of this branch of industry in Ireland, the aid given by government, and the exertions made by associations for the extension and improvement of flax cultivation in the South and West of Ireland at the present time, must have afforded him information sufficient to justify him in recommending to his colleagues the appropriation of a sum of money, and the adoption of a legislative measure, to aid the extension and improvement of this crop in Canada; thus leading to the introduction of manufactures, which must prove of importance, not only to the agricultural, but to the commercial interests and to the general welfare.

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Surely one of the best rules in conversation is, never to say a thing which any of the company can reasonably wish we had rather left unsaid; nor can there anything be more contrary to the ends for which people meet together than to part unsatisfied with each other or themselves.