

wheat to the acre, 44½ of oats, 23½ of barley and 12½ of peas. But we have seen no detailed prospectus, in which the problem of farming on the proposed scale is worked out, theoretically. To work it out theoretically should not be a difficult task; the practical solution of the problem is another matter. But why risk so much, by way of experiment? An experiment on a much smaller scale would be not less decisive. It cannot be reasonably pretended that, as in manufactures, there is any great advantage in farming on an overgrown scale. The risk is proportionate to the magnitude of the scale of operations. Exceptionally large farms have not always succeeded; they have perhaps as often proved failures as successes, and the number of them in North America to-day is, owing to failure, less than it was at a previous date. The Bell farm is a moderate experiment compared to the ambitious project of Sir John Kaye. Is the balance sheet of the Bell farm satisfactory? A larger farm would not have a better but a worse chance. On what precedents does Sir John Kaye build his fabric? There will be some curiosity to see his prospectus. Five millions of dollars ought not to be lightly risked, in an enterprise of this nature; but it is reasonable to suppose that the subscribers will require to be fully informed before they part with their money. This is mainly an affair between them and the projector. Still it has its public side. The failure of so gigantic a venture would inflict a public injury on the North-West, as it would be sure to be attributed to wrong causes.

But the possible success of the scheme is not the first question that has to be considered. Ought the large quantity of land asked for to be sold to a single company? This is a question for the government. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company is at liberty to alienate its lands, in the way proposed; that the government would be justified in doing so, is the first question to be settled. No doubt it sold much larger quantities of lands to other companies; but they are under obligations to redistribute them, in small parcels, and did not contemplate making them into colossal farms. There might be some present public advantage in conceding the lands asked. A large capital would set production in motion sooner than it would come, on an equal scale, if left to isolated individual effort; and the returns would add to the wealth of the country. But we must look to the future, as well as to the present, in such a case; we must ask ourselves whether the public welfare is most likely to be promoted by colossal farms, worked by laborers, or by small farms, worked by their owners. This question only requires to be stated to be answered. The public decision in favor of the small farm will be prompt and decisive.

Ranches, on a large scale, have been started, in the North-West, with the approbation of the government. True, but the lands are only leased, not sold as is proposed in the present case. And even if we had made the mistake of selling large quantities of land for ranching purposes, nothing would justify its repetition. On

every account, we should recommend Sir John Kaye to lower sail considerably; to make the experiment on a scale on which even failure would be endurable, though he doubtless believes that he may reasonably hope for success. On the colossal scale proposed, it is not at all improbable that the projectors might fail to carry out fully their part of the bargain. In a more moderate scheme, the government might reasonably meet his views; the necessary capital would be more easily got, certain though the projector may feel of his five millions. The result of the experiment, if success attended it, would be not less decisive; and the disaster of failure, if failure come, would be more endurable and less poignant.

#### ASBESTOS.

A correspondent asks us for some information about asbestos, what is it, where found in Canada, to what uses applied, etc., etc. It is only three or four years since we devoted a couple of columns to the subject; but we do so again, inasmuch as the production of the mineral, and doubtless the demand for it has increased in the interval. Its greater commonness of late years has brought its usefulness to many purposes hitherto undreamt of, such as its application in making fire proof houses, preventing the extension of fires in theatres and public buildings. It is plentifully found in Canada, and its further cheapening is only a matter of time. It is already used in the cities of New York and Boston, in public buildings, especially churches, theatres, opera houses, Pullman and post-office cars and bags for registered letters may be made fire-proof by the use of asbestos.

A letter of Dr. James Reed, of Reedsdale, Megantic County, Quebec, to the *Chicago Mining Review* gives much information as to the progress made in mining this substance. Foreign capital is now being used in its development; and the fact that a quantity of the ore and goods manufactured therefrom was exhibited at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, has drawn greater attention to the industry. Five thousand tons has been raised during 1886 from the asbestos mines in Thetford and Coleraine townships and is exported to the United States, England, Scotland, Germany, Italy and France.

The companies now working in Thetford are: Boston Asbestos Packing Co., King Brothers, Irvine, Johnston & Co., and Ward Brothers. In Coleraine, Anglo-Canadian Asbestos Co. (limited) of London, Frechett-Douille Co., the Scottish-Canadian Asbestos Co. of Glasgow, the Fenwick & Sclater Co., and the Coleraine mines.

It is undisputed, says Dr. Reed, that Canadian asbestos is the best in the world, exceeding in every particular the Italian, and as it can be produced at less than one-third the cost is driving that ore out of the market. As the Canadian mines have been opened up in depth, it has been universally found that the ore increased in quantity and quality, both as respects its length, quality of fibre and its beautiful white silky color. This has been particularly noticed at the mines of the Boston Asbestos Packing Co.,

King Brothers and the Irving, Johnston Co., at Thetford, which are the oldest and deepest mines yet opened, the fibre attaining five inches in length.

The demand for the ore is equal to the supply, prices are firm, especially for the first quality for which there is a rapid sale, bringing \$100 a ton, the average price is \$60, yielding a profit of one hundred per cent. Two companies are now at work in Coleraine, with every modern appliance for economical working, steam drills, air compressors, steam derricks, etc. The Anglo-Canadian Asbestos Co. (limited) of London, and the Scottish and Canadian Asbestos Co., of Glasgow, are opening up the deposits on a large scale, the latter company putting up spacious buildings and machinery for the manufacturing of the ore at the mines. Those companies work both summer and winter.

Our correspondent is referred, for further particulars, to a book on asbestos, illustrated with four maps, to Messrs. Allen & Stead, bankers, 44 Broadway, New York, containing important scientific information on asbestos, by R. H. Martin, of the Chalmers Spence Co.

#### TORONTO TRADE.

The trade of the year at this point has been in the main a satisfactory one. In contrast with former years, when values of merchandise were falling and profits therefore uncertain and fluctuating, it has been possible in 1886, by reason of the rise in price of some staple articles such as metal goods, woollens, and other textile materials, to obtain a reasonable profit. Purchases were therefore made with more freedom and sales made with more satisfaction. Failures have not been serious or very numerous during the year and the probabilities are that the wholesale merchants of the city have as a whole added a fair sum to their capital.

Manufacturers, too, have some reason for thankfulness in the improved conditions under which their work has been carried on. Toronto has not the large cotton and tweed mills which other cities and towns boast, but she has machine-shops, foundries, implement works, shoe factories, wood-working establishments, breweries, an extensive distillery, flouring mills, paint-mills, knitting and blanket mills, a carpet factory. None of these, so far as we know, have been idle, while most of them, if not all, have had a satisfactory season. It is significant, as assisting to point out the growth of Toronto as a manufacturing city, that our imports of coal for the year 1886 were 391,000 tons, valued at \$2,195,000, where in 1885 the coal purchases amounted to but 355,000 tons, valued at \$1,652,000. In the year 1884 Toronto imported only 330,000 tons of coal. We subjoin figures showing totals of import and export for the year, also of certain classes of goods as entered at the Customs.

1886.	Total imports.	Total exports.
January .....	\$1,379,988	\$301,093
February .....	1,940,552	216,115
March .....	2,226,250	297,074
April .....	1,416,474	235,118
May .....	1,328,440	112,872