

increasing in excellency every year. This is not only of direct benefit to the Province, but it is also a stimulant to the improvement of private herds.

"The farmer is a political football," said Mr. Messenger. "In the Government of his country he has no voice." After the speaker had described the situation of the farmer and his manner of voting and submitting to the will of the interests, he outlined a policy or remedies for the betterment of rural life and thought in the East. These follow in the speakers words:

"In my humble opinion there are three principal conditions or lines of action necessary to improve the farmer's position: (1) Education; (2) Co-operation; (3) Co-operative or associational effort to obtain legislative recognition. My maximum general education for the man who intends to obtain his living from the soil would be the first two years in our Maritime universities. This would develop his mind and enable him to grasp intelligently the economic and industrial questions that are constantly demanding his attention as a citizen. Two years at our Agricultural College would give him the necessary theoretical knowledge of his own calling, and not least should be a business training. This develops clear thinking and clear thinking leads to accurate and wise action. A business training teaches one to count the cost of operations and reject those showing a loss, if conditions are against possible profit. A mind trained in business is never satisfied with guesswork. He should know business law and the elements of the law of contracts, etc., and for this reason I have often wished that our Agricultural College at Truro could put on a business course for farmers, not of course as elaborate as those of our business colleges, but embracing the teaching of knowledge necessary for the farmer as a business man.

"Co-operation is being attempted as a factor in improving the farmer's condition, and so far is only partially successful, owing to outside opposition and inside greed and suspicion. Theoretically it is good, and its efficiency will depend on the honesty and ability of its administrators.

"As long as the farmer is a blind partizan at the beck and call of political jobbers, just so long will he have no influence in making laws favorable to his prosperity and advancement. The Western farmer is showing what can be done by united effort and the politicians are taking heed. These farmers have adopted a political platform calling for improved legislation, equitable legislation and clean legislation. If the organized farmers of the West succeed in influencing parliament sufficiently to obtain laws favorable to their interests, it will be a boon to farmers all over the Dominion and encourage them to place the call of party second to their own interests. May the day soon come when the farmer will be as shrewd in dealing with Parliament as the manufacturer and banker are to-day."

Chinook.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

"Chinook coming!" exclaimed the writer one morning in early February as he entered the house holding his ears.

It had been cold on the Prairie—three days of stormy weather with the thermometer never higher than twenty below and as far down as minus fifty-two. At some points the shy fluid hid itself in the bulb. It was the coldest dip for many years.

One does not mind this severe weather so badly as the unsophisticated might suppose. I have suffered more from zero weather following a thaw than from twenty-five or thirty below in the middle of a period of settled cold. Nevertheless, forty or fifty below gets on one's nerves after a while. So it was with a buoyant sense of welcome and relief that the family filed out to see the sign that had prompted our opening remark.

Away to the southwest, sixty to a hundred miles distant, the long range of mountain peaks and the sky above them were shrouded in a blue haze—sure sign of approaching Chinook. That was Saturday. Friday night it had been thirty-four below. Saturday afternoon the mercury began rising significantly. By Sunday afternoon it had reached forty-two above, a rise of seventy-six degrees in about thirty-six hours. (We have seen it rise that much in twenty-four). Followed ten days of beautiful balmy weather with the quicksilver never lower than four at night and sometimes not touching the freezing point at all. Snow settled; roofs ran water till dry; ponds filled; woodpiles had a rest; stables warmed up; manure heaps thawed out; cattle roamed the prairie and poultry basked in the sun. Such is the miracle of the Chinook.

What is a Chinook? I don't know. I might consult an Encyclopedia and say that with impressive diction calculated to convince the reader that I did know but that the subject was too abstruse for him to follow readily. I have read such explanations but in the capacity of simple reader failed to really grasp the idea and retained a private doubt whether the exponent had done so either. I did go the length of looking up Webster's Imperial just now and read with mild, incredulous surprise:

"In Montana and neighboring territory on the Eastern slope of the Rockies, a warm dry wind from the West or North, probably so called because coming from the region of the Chinook country."

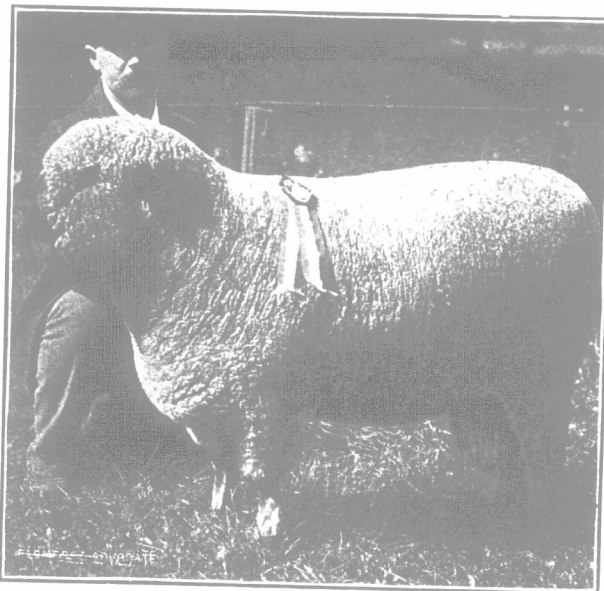
Which convinces me that the author of Webster's Imperial does not know much more about the subject than the rest of us. He may be correct as to the origin of the term, Chinook being the name of a tribe of Indians once inhabiting the Northwestern states. But as to the cause, he is silent, and as to the direction—well, all our most pronounced Chinooks come in from the southwest.

Locally the incidence of Chinooks is attributed to the direction of the mountain passes. At all events, Chinook influence is far more pronounced in some localities than in others and in a general way decreases rapidly as one recedes from the Mountains. Often the snow in the Red Willow valley is gone while there are still several inches in the Beaverlodge neighborhood, ten or fifteen miles northeastward and a foot or so on the open prairie thirty miles farther on. We attribute its balmy breath to the warm Pacific currents. Its capacity for spiriting away the snow is attributed to the fact that in crossing the mountains the moisture is precipitated, leaving the air dry and ready to absorb moisture again. And that is about as deep as I care to go into the subject. Perhaps it is a step beyond my depth.

Mountaineers say the Chinook rushes through the passes with a roar. I can quite believe it, for the approach of a sudden wind here on the Prairie is accompanied by just such a sound, which may sometimes be heard miles in advance. And yet I have never seen a wind here as strong as several experienced in Ontario around Easter time about five years ago—in fact nothing to approach it.

My first experience of a genuine Chinook I shall never forget. We were on our way into the country in late October. After driving for days across the plain north of the Peace against a strong westerly wind, with quite a few degrees of frost each night, we descended at eventide into the vast, deep-tough-valley of the Peace at the historic old trading post of Dunvegan, with its white-washed store and factor's residence approached through an avenue of Manitoba maples. From the west the broad, deep, placid river flows down through a narrow gap, hemmed in by precipitous six-hundred-foot cliffs. The tall, grizzly old French-Canadian ferryman, Joe Choquette, who was to conduct us across the stream next morning and with whom we stayed in the deserted Catholic mission that night, showed us some remarkable cobs of squaw corn, and kindly initiated us into the mysteries of bannock-baking, after sampling the product of which culinary achievement we went out to attend the team. Great was the surprise on stepping outside to feel our cheeks bathed in a soft, warm zephyr which June in Ontario could not surpass.

"It's a Chinook," said Joe nonchalantly as one who had experienced hundreds of them.



Lloyd-Jones' Champion Shropshire Ram.

See sale ad. page 473.

Down through the canyon it wafted gently from the West, growing stiffer through the night until by the next forenoon it was almost as heavy, though not so cold as the wind on the preceding day.

I have seen many Chinooks since then. Some are warm and soft as the summer breeze; some strong and chill to face even though they are mysteriously licking up the snow and daily settling it beneath the flaky crusts of ice that form by night on its surface. When the Chinook blows in force it is uncomfortable to face, especially in summer attire, for the summer Chinooks are sometimes scarcely warmer than those of mid-winter. "Hudson's Bay Chinook" is an ironical term applied to northeastern winds or storms.

Some people profess to prefer a steady winter un-interrupted by the Chinook. But to most of us it is as welcome as April showers. It breaks and greatly modifies the rigor of the winter, affording opportunity for many chores that are none too comfortable in cold weather. It saves feed and fuel and brings pleasure and respite for man and beast. It is a phenomenon of the climate on the Eastern Rocky slopes.

Peace River District.

W. D. ALBRIGHT.

The Flax and Fibre Industry in Canada.

A convention of the Flax Growers of Ontario was held at London on February 28 and March 1. There was a good attendance of flax manufacturers and much information was secured by the exchange of ideas relative to the different methods of handling flax from the time the seed is sown until the fibre was ready to be spun. The flax industry is one of the earliest in the country and it reached quite large proportions at one time, but of late years there has been a gradual decline in the acreage devoted to the growing of flax. This has

partly been caused by shortage of labor, and partly by the fact that other crops that could be grown on the farm were more remunerative. There has been little improvement in the machinery for handling flax. The methods employed fifty years ago are to a large extent in vogue at the present time. It was pointed out that flax is a twenty-five year cycle crop. It drops steadily for a few years and then gradually increases again. The consensus of opinion was that a new era of flax growing was being ushered in, and flax men were optimistic regarding the future of the industry.

In 1916 it was estimated that 5,000 acres of flax was grown in Canada for fibre purposes and this was handled by thirty flax mills, practically all operating in Western Ontario. In a good season, on fertile soil, an average of two tons of flax is considered a fair yield. The price varies from fifteen to twenty dollars a ton. A large expense in handling flax comes in the pulling. A fair estimate of the cost of pulling an acre is from eight to ten dollars. A lot of hand work is necessary before the flax straw is converted into fibre. In an ordinary season one acre of average flax will produce about 400 pounds of fibre and 12 bushels of seed. Some of the growers present at the meeting claimed that flax was as profitable as other farm crops, and the reason given why there was not more of it grown to-day was the lack of machinery for handling it. In discussing flax growing from the farmers' standpoint, William Leach, of Alvinston, claimed that he grew flax primarily to prepare the soil for the wheat crop. He seldom has a failure of wheat after flax, and yet he does not fertilize the ground previous to sowing the wheat. His method is to select the best field on the farm, which is in sod, plow it in the fall and put the soil in good tilth before seeding in the spring. Practically no weeds grow with the flax when the land is well prepared, and a stroke with the cultivator after the flax is harvested leaves the ground in excellent condition for fall wheat. Mr. Leach strongly favors flax being purchased on the tonnage basis, as the man who prepares his soil will then be paid according to the crop which is produced. Purchasing on the acreage basis offers no incentive for a farmer to devote his best field to flax or to give the crop proper attention.

The early history of the flax industry in Canada was discussed by William Forrester, of Mitchell. A resume of the growing of flax in the pioneer days of this country was given, dating back as early as 1855. In those days the land was new and flax was a crop which could be grown and harvested among the stumps. Right up to the present time the rough fields have been largely devoted to flax, while the level fields where harvesting could be done with machinery was sown to a cereal crop. Flax mills were erected in different parts of the country to handle the raw material, and several factories were also built to spin the fibre into thread and linen. However, they were rather shortlived, and Canadian growers were forced to depend on American spinners to handle their fibre. Some were of the opinion that prices were kept down on account of a combine of American spinners, but others claimed that there was a tendency for Canadian fibre to be lacking in uniformity of quality. This was partly attributed to the fact that the bulk of the flax is "dew retted". With the introduction of "water retting" there is no reason why the fibre produced in Canada should not compare favorably with that grown in the European countries. In the early days mill owners did not have to contract with farmers for flax, but now in order to secure a supply the land must be leased and the mill men do practically all the work, with the exception of preparing the soil. The cost of harvesting the flax and converting it into fibre has greatly increased during the past few years. As yet hand labor is employed to handle the flax, but it is believed that in the near future suitable machinery will be placed on the market for pulling flax and also to facilitate the work in the mills. Regarding the question as to whether or not flax is hard on the land, the answer was that it is not, that flax has been grown three years in succession on the same soil followed by an exceptionally good grain crop.

A. L. McCready, of St. Mary's, discussed the cause of the decline of the flax industry in Canada, and claimed that it was primarily an economical one. Efficiency of management and "water retting" will make the flax industry more profitable. With the "dew retting" system there is a tremendous expense for labor, production of uneven fibre, and in fact a waste all the way through. It was explained that the water for retting flax would in most cases have to be specially prepared, as it must be softer than that found in most springs in Ontario. However, it is believed possible to effect a remedy. Canada is not the only country in which the flax industry has declined. Statistics given showed that in most countries there has been a gradual reduction in fibre from 1863. The introduction of cotton goods has tended to cause a decline in prices. Mr. McCready explained his method of leasing land. It is on a tonnage-acreage basis. In this way the grower who produced a heavy crop was paid for it, while the man who had a failure also received something for the use of his land. In the St. Mary's district where Mr. McCready operates a mill, this system is apparently satisfactory to the farmers. The grower prepares the soil and draws the flax to the mill and is given so much per acre based on a one-and-one-half-ton crop, and thirty cents per hundred is given for all over a ton and one-half.

Considerable discussion took place relative to the paying for flax, and it was pointed out that in order to encourage the industry and meet with the greatest success it was necessary for the farmer to share the increased price received by the mill men. Naturally, mill men endeavor to secure their flax as cheaply as possible, and in so doing have offered little encourage-

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