

### PRICES.

In January, 1915, the price of flax at Belfast, Ireland, ranged from \$434 to \$607.50 per short ton for Dutch fibre, and was \$369 per ton for Russian fibre. The price in December, 1915, was \$700 per ton. These prices are the highest on record.

The price of flax seed at Winnipeg during November, 1915, ranged from \$1.62½ to \$1.89 per bushel.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Flax for fibre is a difficult crop to handle, as so much of the work has to be done by hand labour. A farmer, who has never grown the crop before, should not attempt more than 1 or 2 acres at first. Apart from the value of the seed, there is little profit from the crop if damaged by bad weather or neglect at some stage of treatment. A small area properly looked after may realize as much profit as double the area carelessly handled.

The particular stage at which a farmer should dispose of his crop must be determined largely by local circumstances. Every stage described in the preceding pages, except scutching, can be done on the farm. There appears to be no reason why a farmer should not pull and dry the crop, remove and clean the seeds during the winter months when other work is slack, take out weeds and square the ends of the bundles of straw, and sell the straw to the scutch mill owner. The latter could carry on retting operations during the summer months and employ the same staff at scutching in the winter, thus having a more skilled supply of labour, and finding employment for them all the year round. Under some such scheme, farmers living at a distance of up to about 10 miles from the scutch mill could dispose of their crop. Green flax straw loses about two-thirds of its weight in drying. The dried straw after threshing loses one-third of its weight in the form of capsules and seeds. The dried threshed straw further loses one-sixth of its weight in the process of retting. This means that 270 pounds of freshly pulled flax will weigh 90 pounds after drying, 60 pounds after threshing, and 50 pounds after retting. Obviously the haulage to the nearest market is very much reduced if as much of the work of handling as is possible is done on the farm.

The scutch mill owner is in a much better position as regards marketing than the farmer. The fibre, which is the only important part of the flax stem, will average only about one-fifth of the weight of the retted straw; in other words, the 50 pounds of retted straw mentioned above will give about 10 pounds of fibre. The scutched fibre, when pressed and put up in bales of about 100 pounds each, occupies comparatively little bulk, and the freight even to a market several thousand miles distant amounts to only a comparatively small fraction of the value of the goods.

A farmer who is not within a reasonable distance of a scutch mill need not attempt to grow a crop of flax for fibre. As, however, the machinery required for the separation of the fibre is comparatively simple, it should not be impossible for a number of farmers in a district where water-power is available to co-operate and erect a small plant of their own.