

WHY NOT LINENS MADE IN CANADA?

A MERCHANT ADVOCATES A MILL FOR THIS MATERIAL—SOME OF THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION.

By A. Munn, Ripley, Ont.

IN a recent issue of The Mail and Empire I noticed an article stating that a certain Mr. Donaldson has been the leader in introducing the cultivation of flax in Ontario, which has proved so successful. Now, if he had pushed the enterprise a little further, and introduced the manufacturing of flax into linen, he would have done the country a further benefit. We have now in Ontario over 50 flax mills, which have a combined output of over 30,000 tons of first-class scutched flax, and not one linen mill to manufacture it. We must look to the United States for a market for all this flax and take whatever price they are kind enough to give us for it.

Why is it so? Why cannot our cotton kings convert one of their idle cotton mills into a linen mill and manufacture all our coarse linens, such as towelling crashes, rough hollandes, hessians, canvas, etc., of which there is a vast quantity used in the Dominion, and could be manufactured with a good profit, and keep our money in the country instead of sending it to some other country?

In the United States they have over 20 linen mills in operation and paying well. Surely this Canada of ours can support one. Our tariff alone would be a good profit, and I am satisfied that every loyal Canadian would endeavor to help the enterprise along.

THE REVIEW is glad to open its columns to a discussion on the subject. It is an interesting question, and if the customers of any of our merchant readers would be benefited by having a nearer market or their flax it is well to know it. Hitherto it has not been found profitable to make coarse linen goods in Canada. Some years ago there was a mill of this class at Streetsville, Ont., in which Toronto capital was interested. The mill was accidentally destroyed by fire, and was never rebuilt, the owners apparently not deeming it a profitable enough venture to start up again. A flax miller in the west purchased a scutching machine from an Irish firm and attempted to use it, but complained that the kind of flax required was not obtainable. The success of the Doon mills, under Mr. Perine, however, and the fine grades of twine made there, show what native energy and enterprise can do.

HIGHER DUTIES ON CANADIAN LINENS.

Two features about the present condition of things are worth considering. In the first place, by the new tariff the Customs duties on imported linens are considerably increased. Bags made of linen are, it is true, left at 20 per cent., but the duties on towels, napkins, stair linen, etc., are increased from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. Linen handkerchiefs are in future dutiable at 35 per cent. instead of 30 per cent., as formerly. On the whole, therefore, the linen list has moved up considerably, and the Controller of Customs stated that it was done to increase the revenue. The increase may have the effect of starting a mill in Canada.

HIGHER FLAX DUTIES IN THE STATES.

The other feature of present conditions is the flax market. The chief markets for our flax are the United States and Great Britain. Last year Canada exported flax as follows:

	Quantity.	Value.
To United States.....	11,503 cwt.	\$94,951
" Great Britain.....	3,887 "	33,936

The exports of flax seed in 1896 were as follows:

	Quantity.	Value.
To Great Britain.....	51,741 bush.	\$37,788
" United States.....	10,381 "	6,432
" France.....	696 "	1,044

The bulk of the exported flax, as will be noticed, goes to the States, and as this was the nearest market, Canadian flax was

usually dressed so as to reach that market under the lowest tariff rates. But under the Dingley bill the duties are raised. The new duties are:

Tow of flax or hemp.....	1/2 c. per lb.
" " retted.....	3/4 c. "
Single yarns of flax tow, 8-lea and fine..	35 per cent.
Yarns of hemp, flax or ramie valued at	
13c. per lb.....	45 "

The new duties, it is claimed, will interfere with the export of flax from Canada and, if so, the question arises will a market be found for a larger quantity in Great Britain? Apparently, a better grade will have to be made and the farmers will have to cultivate their crop with greater care than they now seem to bestow upon it.

A POINTER FROM ENGLAND.

The British Textile Mercury is surprised at the decadence of growing flax in Britain. "The fact is notorious," it says, "that the cultivation of flax and hemp in this country and in Ireland has long been diminishing. In England and Scotland we believe it is nearly extinct. The facts as regards both countries are a matter of surprise, because with a good demand at their own door in the Belfast, Scotch and English linen industries, and others which consume these materials, which altogether import, we believe, about £18,000,000 value annually, it might have been thought that they would have been anxious to get a considerable share of it, if not to meet the whole requirement. That there has not been an extensive revival of flax cultivation in both countries since the great decline in values of other descriptions of agricultural produce is still more surprising, and we are afraid that farmers of both countries lack the capacity to see, and the enterprise to appropriate, opportunities of promoting their own interests."

Our contemporary adds a word of advice to Canadian growers: "Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen and Welshmen who have emigrated to our various colonies and other foreign lands are, besides foreign competitors already in the market, daily more and more looking to, and growingly appreciating the great advantages offered by, the English market, and it is to be hoped that the former will continue to do so. We are glad to see that Canada is making an attempt to get a share. Surely amidst its vast territories there ought to be found lands that will produce every quality of the fibre required. In the United States enormous crops of flax are grown for the seed, but growers cannot have both seed and fibre, so the latter is wasted. If, however, it can be grown for seed, it certainly can for fibre, because it must pass through the stage of perfection of the latter in order to attain the former. Why, then, should Canadian farmers not make a determined attempt to meet this demand, which certainly seems as if it should yield a better profit than growing corn, considering the very low prices that for a long time have ruled for the latter?"

HAVE YOU ARRANGED?

Have you made arrangements yet for your down comforters, etc., for fall? If not, you would do well to examine into the claims put forth by the Toronto Feather & Down Co., Ltd., as to quality and prices of their new lines which are now on the road. Their largely increased facilities enable them to turn out a class of work not excelled in this country, and their samples contain all the new "hits" in this line. See ad. page 57.

WHITE GOODS.

Nainsooks and India linens, also Swiss spot muslins, to retail from 17 1/2 to 50c., and Scotch spot muslins to sell from 8 to 20c. with a full range of Victoria lawns, are lines shown by Brophy, Cains & Co.