

America, but London is the great distributing depot for the world, and most of it goes there."

"Apropos of the production of flax, Mr. Holmes, what is the amount that can be raised per acre?"

"About thirty tons to the acre."

"And what is the highest price it has reached during comparatively recent times?"

"It has brought as high as £45 per ton, delivered in London, and has gone down to £17 10s, and even £15."

"Has the trade been a steadily increasing one since its inception?"

"Well, I can hardly give a negative or affirmative answer to your question in the way that you put it. When the industry first started it gradually grew to be one of the big features of our exports, then it fell off to comparatively little or nothing. Some little time afterwards it sprung up again during what was known as the 'revival of the flax trade,' and since then it has passed through various stages of depression and prosperity until at present the industry is worth about the amount per annum to the colony that I gave you a few minutes ago."

"You gave evidence as an expert before the 'Flax and Other Industries Committee' in 1890, did you not, Mr. Holmes?"

"Yes, and the expression of my opinion at that time is in accordance with my feeling and views at the present time, and I then said that if the Government were to place a sufficient sum upon the estimates to induce greater interest in the development of the industry by reason of improved machinery, that it would attract a larger number of competitors and the country would gain the benefit of the brains of engineers, and other men, flax dressers (practical and otherwise) in developing some new machinery that would both improve the dressing and reduce the cost."

"At that time I believe the question of inspecting the fibre before shipment was also gone into?"

"Yes; and I said then as I say now, I can hardly conceive that there should be two opinions on so important a question. To my mind it presents various advantages, the chief one being that it would have a deterring effect. The mere appointment alone would have a deterring effect upon all persons who are alleged to be careless in the manufacture of the fibre. And it would also have the effect of securing some absolute certainty to the honest producer, and then it would do away with the question of arbitration cases, which has been frequent in the city of London on flax questions. In Ireland, butter, for instance, is examined by experts and branded, and the butter is sold upon a basis in that way. As an instance, every farmer sends his butter to the butter exchange, and there it is branded with the Government brand. There are two inspectors who examine the butter, and if they have any doubts about it they refer it to another, and so on to the end of the chapter with the whole lot of casks, some thousands of which are examined from time to time. That being the case, there is no uncertainty with regard to the sale of the particular produce, because it is branded, and it goes to the outer world with the Government brand upon it, and insures for the farmer a price according to the value of the market at the time. In that way the producer is enabled to get the standard value of his article without any reference to arbitration, which has unfortunately taken place in the sale of New Zealand hemp."

"In acting as grader for the Flax Millers' Association you have no official standing with the Government, I suppose, Mr. Holmes."

"No, I have no connection with the Government, but simply act as the accredited representative of the association and receive from them 3d. per bale for inspection."

"Oh! one question more, what is the flax exported from New Zealand mostly made into?"

"The larger quantity is used for binding twine and cord, although a fair proportion is used for the manufacture of rope."

"Would not a greater profit accrue to the colony if the

twine were manufactured here than by the export of the raw material?"

"Undoubtedly there would; but as I have explained before, we have not as yet got the machinery to manufacture on a large scale."

"Well, I must thank you for the information you have given me, which I am sure will be of interest to our readers."

"Quite welcome, Mr. FAIR PLAY, and I am always pleased to be of any use in my power to you."

Now that the English House of Lords and their obstructive attitude towards democratic measures are being the subject of much discussion, the following remarks, culled from this year's issue of that excellent publication, the *Financial Reform Almanac*, may prove of special interest:—"It seems to be a common fallacy in some quarters that the Lords merit our profound veneration and gratitude because their ancestors, in the days of King John, gave us Magna Charta. Now there are four good reasons for refusing gratitude to the House of Lords to-day for that undoubtedly great historical document. Firstly, because, though gratitude may be due to a man for doing a certain act, it does not follow that it is due to his descendants, however remote. Secondly, because the Barons of 1215 were practically not the ancestors of the present peerage. Thirdly, because the armour-plated Barons of King John's day, like the gold-plated nobility of our own, were actuated principally, if not entirely, by their own interests, and whatever good came to the nation as a whole was purely reflective and not in the reckoning, and, fourthly, because the evil deeds done by the nobility have more than cancelled whatever good they have secured.

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As to the persistent and consistent way in which they legislate in the interests of "property, property" and nothing else, the *Almanac* may again be quoted:—"The action of the Lords has ever been directed towards the preservation of property. Hence, even to this day, the laws protecting property are far more stringent than those protecting the person, except in the case of murder. In 1810 it was a hanging matter to steal goods of the value of half-a-crown. A Bill was brought in by Lord Holland to increase the value to five shillings, but even a modest measure was rejected by the Gilded Chamber. Lord Wynford said if the Bill passed 'the people of England would no longer sleep safely in their beds.'

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The Manchester ship canal is now in good working order. In one week, that ending January 15, there sailed from Manchester 19 vessels with cargoes of 2460 tons, whilst there were 23 arrivals, the weight of the various cargoes being estimated at about 4000 tons. The arrival of the steamer *Finsbury* in the canal with the first cargo of cotton—4170 bales—to Manchester naturally aroused considerable interest. The *Finsbury* is a vessel of 1909 tons register, and her progress up the canal was slow. In the same week the *Glenisle*, with 5000 bales, was also docked at Manchester.

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The Manchester men are evidently determined to back up the trade of the canal by every means in their power. *Transport* referring to the canal and its traffic says:—"Considerable prominence has been given to a suggestion by a Manchester firm that the leading shippers of Manchester should take concerted action with a view to all their exports going by the canal. The reason for this is that ships cannot be expected to come up to Manchester while there is any uncertainty as to return cargoes. On Tuesday an informal meeting of traders resolved to requisition the Lord Mayor to call a public meeting with a view to stimulating the Company to at once vigorously set about organising a regular service of large ocean-going steamers, the adequate employment of which it was stated could be assured.