

## THE HEMP INDUSTRY.

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### IMPROVED QUALITY.

THE quality of the hemp graded last month was a decided improvement on that of the previous month. Not only was the strength of the fibre better, but the colour was greatly improved. This is in great part due to the milling of better leaf and to the improved weather-conditions for bleaching. The work of milling is being maintained at a good standard, both the stripping and scutching exhibiting careful manipulation, though here and there poor work has been in evidence. Some millers, it is stated, have not been able to turn out the quality of fibre they desired, owing to the difficulty of securing competent labour, due no doubt to the unusual extension in operations this season and the consequent necessity to employ untrained men.

### STRIPPER-SLIPS AND TOW.

The preparation of stripper-slips for export is showing a remarkable increase. The necessity of preventing flax-refuse polluting streams is largely responsible for the development taking place. This has forced millers to adopt proper means of saving the residual material. A system coming rapidly into vogue is the use of an automatic elevator, to lift the waste from the drains, in order to wash it expeditiously and with as little labour as possible.

Now that stripper-slips are being graded, no doubt the quality will be improved, and thus probably make the slips more valuable to the manufacturer abroad. Little or no profit is made out of this commodity at present, except in the case of mills which have a large output.

The quality of the tow coming forward is distinctly unsatisfactory. In only a few cases is it as clean as it should be. Failure to free this by-product from dust and rubbish is the dominant weakness. This is to be regretted, as the use of tow is extending among manufacturers, and deterioration in quality will naturally check this tendency. The effect of this may not be immediately apparent, however, as the demand at present is treading on the heels of the supply.

### TO MAKE GRADING UNIFORM.

The graders at the different ports are being temporarily transferred. This will enable each man to come into close touch with the work of the other officials, and, by thus encouraging the conception of a common standard, maintain that uniformity in the work of official classification of hemp which is so much to be desired.