

low-lying land. Growing flax and grazing sheep may be as profitable as if you were to destroy the flax and bring the land to higher cultivation. Flax-land is often very patchy, consisting of light land and heavy land in gullies.

90. As far as you know at the present time, you do not think it would be a profitable industry to embark in?—I do not think any farmer, with the 5s. a ton that is paid for a right to cut, would go in for growing flax as against cultivating his land. I have grown European or Irish flax for about six years for the seed for commercial purposes.

91. *Mr. Symes.*] Not for the fibre?—The fibre at the present time is of no commercial value. I would willingly hand over the fibre to any one who would come and take it away for nothing. So far, no person has established an industry with a view to working up the fibre. I have grown the flax for seed, and have grown as much as twenty bushels to the acre, and have sold it at 4s. a bushel—fifty-six pounds in a bushel. If I could get £10 per ton for the seed I would continue to cultivate, say, from ten to twenty acres a year. I approached Messrs. Kempthorne, Prosser, and Co. three years ago, when I had a quantity of seed on hand for disposal, but they would only give me £8 per ton, delivered in Dunedin. That was not sufficient to induce me to continue the cultivation of flax for commercial purposes. I can grow flax with very little expense. I put in the seed about the end of September on land that I am putting in grass-seed at the same time. I cut it with the ordinary binder, put it into stooks, and have it threshed with the ordinary machine, and in that state send it into the market. Some people are of opinion that the cultivation of Irish flax exhausts the land. That is not my experience. I found, with a portion of my paddock laid down under the cultivation of flax and English grasses, grass more luxuriant on that portion than on any other portion of the paddock. That, to my mind, is proof that the cultivation of European or Irish flax is not so exhausting to the land as some people think.

92. *Mr. McLean.*] You said for commercial purposes. What is the seed converted into?—It is converted into linseed-oil, linseed-cake, &c.

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