

in his appendix to the departmental report for 1885, about 33 per cent. Taking this as a fair average, the requirement for the production of the needed quantity of phosphoric acid to be restored to the soil would be about 177,000 tons (of 2,000 pounds) of apatite. During the past six years the apatite raised averaged 25,500 tons, of which 24,000 tons have been exported; so that we have been supplying ourselves with 500 tons of phosphoric acid against 59,000 needed to keep the constituent elements of plant food to the proper standard. What I mainly desire to impress upon the agricultural community is the necessity of bringing up their farms to the normal condition of fertility, and to give at the same time thereby a much needed impetus to the manufacture of fertilizers and the mining of phosphate. To sum up, the whole art of farming consists in supplying the nutritious elements of plants in the form most favourable for absorption and assimilation. As ordinary manure does not always contain the two most important inorganic elements of plant food, phosphoric acid and potash, in sufficient quantity for plant use, the needs of mankind demand the employment of artificial fertilizers along with or as a substitute for farmyard manure. A demand for the materials from which these could be manufactured would at once materially aid the now almost abandoned phosphate mining of this country.

“Inquiries were made of my department, early in the year, regarding the question of rendering natural phosphate soluble in an economical manner through calcination. It was stated that in France and Belgium apatite had been treated in the same way as limestone for the manufacture of lime, the crude material being baked in an oven, then powdered and mixed with soil with which it at once became incorporated.

“I had the subject at once referred to the chemist at the Experimental Farm, and his report forms an appendix herewith.

“The experiments appear to show that the solubility of this valuable natural fertilizer is not materially increased through calcination. The finely ground phosphate is soluble only to a slight degree in water, and in the soil the process is extremely slow, but further experiments are now in progress with the hope of obtaining results which will be of practical benefit to the agricultural community.”

ASBESTUS.

931. There is probably no mining industry in Canada that has shown such marked progress as that of the peculiar material called asbestus. The mineral which is produced in Canada under this head is in reality not asbestus proper, but a form of serpentine called chrysotile. It occurs in veins in certain portions of the great belt of serpentine rocks of the Eastern Townships of Quebec. In the Laurentian rocks of certain areas the variety actinolite sometimes forms hilly masses of considerable size, which answers well for cements, paints, etc., though not found to answer for the manufacture of millboards and the finer qualities of steam packing.

The Eastern Townships' asbestus is shipped in large quantities to England, Germany, Belgium, Holland and the United States.

932. The true value of the mineral was not at first recognized, and in the first year of mining operations (1878) only 50 tons were disposed of. The