

from it, but will stand hilling; the larger the plant grows, the more dangerous to plow so close as to cut the plant; the side roots supply the branches and bulbs. After the 14th of August the plant must be cultivated no more; must be left untouched.

The Pods are ripe when they change color from a pea-green to a dark green and yellow. On pressing a pod it will split, when ripe; they ought to be gathered before they split open. Squeeze a pod open, and, with the thumb and forefinger of one hand, seize the silk where it joins the bottom of the pod, and the thumb and forefinger of the other hand, making a circular sweep; all the seeds are detached at one sweep, leaving the richest mass of satiny silk; the seeds to be thrown in one sack, the satin or silk in another. I have been precise in my directions, entertaining the most explicit confidence that the silk can entirely supersede the cotton plant. Its fibre or staple is longer and firmer, and of a gloss no silk or satin can match. During ten years I have planted cotton in Yazoo, Mississippi valley. My brand was sought by the Liverpool and Manchester speculator, and brought the highest prices; and on that practical experience I ground my convictions with regard to the Silk Weed, and, as a Canadian, I feel a double interest toward its success for Her Majesty's Government. I shall be happy on all occasions to convey to your Excellency any further information that may be required, and inclose you a few more seeds, and remain your Excellency's

Most obedient servant,

(Signed), FREDERIC W. HART, M. D.

Who knows but this fibre plant, Silk Weed or *Asclepias*, may, from its hardness, glossiness and fibrous texture, yet take the place of cotton, which could not grow in Canada, lying so far north as it does. But this plant, borne from the heights of the Rocky Mountains, may find a more congenial home in the less rigorous climate of Canada.

Cotton.

Editor of the Canadian Agriculturist.

Sir,

The "Leader" of this day's date contains an interesting notice, transcribed from the "Kingston Whig," of a plant sent from the Rocky Mountains by Dr. Hart to Lord Lyons, and which, it is suggested, may be grown in Canada, and prove a substitute for the *Gossypium herbaceum* or "cotton-plant."

The plant in question has been pronounced by the Secretary of the Botanical Society of Canada to be an *Asclepias*; and is denominated "a new fibre plant."

A few additional observations respecting this plant may not be uninteresting to your readers.

The *Asclepias*, so called after *Æsculapius*—

the former name being Greek, the latter, Latin—belongs to the Milkweed family. The author of the article on Botany in the Edinburgh Encyclopædia divides this family into 51 species, Johnson and Paxton into 36, and Gray into 22. The plant referred to is by no means a new plant, if it is, as I apprehend it to be, the *Asclepias Syriaca*, for it was known as a native of North America in the year 1622. The "Lower Canadians" are, I believe, well acquainted with it, and are accustomed to use the Spring shoots as an esculent, and to stuff their beds with the cotton concealed within its pods. This cotton is, as described in Dr. Hart's communication, of the softest possible texture, and has, in consequence, been called "Virginia Silk." In the Edinburgh Encyclopædia but two habitats of the plant are named—*Virginia* and *Astracan*. Of the 36 species described by Paxton, 24 are natives of North America, and 26 are hardy.

There is one of these Milkweeds, *Asclepias tuberosa*, the Pleurisy-root, with whose beautiful bright-orange umbellate blossoms the inhabitants of Peterboro' are doubtless familiar, and others of the same family may be found in our neighborhood.

I imagine that there would be no difficulty in cultivating the Silkweed in Canada, by sowing the seeds in a very light soil and giving them plenty of room; but whether its cultivation would eventuate in the beneficial result anticipated by Dr. Hart is another question, and one more difficult of solution. The experiment may be at all events worth trial. Sugar, if I mistake not, has been manufactured from its blossoms.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant.

V. CLEMENT

Peterboro', June 23, 1862.

[If the plant referred to in the foregoing communications is the common milk weed, so well known as a troublesome weed in many parts of Canada, as we are inclined to suppose it to be, from Dr. Hart's description, any expectations of its proving valuable for manufacturing purposes will, in our opinion, certainly be found fallacious. The silk, though beautiful to look at, has no more strength or tenacity of fibre than thistle down, and we doubt its being of much more value for any useful purpose.—Ed.]

One plant of the wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) having 600 flowers and two seeds to each flower gives 1,200 seeds.

One plant of the wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) gives the same as the above.