

for all the forests, plains, and uncleared ground are common to all, and it is permitted to each one to clear and sow as much as he wishes, is able to, or requires; and the ground thus cleared remains each person's property as long as he continues to cultivate and to use it, though when it is entirely abandoned by its possessor, any who wishes may then take possession of it, but under no other circumstances."¹ In one of the Relations we find it stated that they "possess hardly anything except in common. A whole village must be without corn, before any individual can be obliged to endure privation."² This custom apparently had its drawbacks and sometimes proved a discouragement to industry.³

MAKING THE CLEARING.

The first step towards organized agriculture was naturally the clearing of a place in which to plant the corn and other products. This involved the removal of the trees, which was accomplished either by felling, or by girdling them, usually in the spring, burning away what material could be removed in this way and finally uprooting the partly burned and rotted trunks.

Large tracts of land, as in the prairie regions, were frequently burned over to furnish clearings for fields and villages. The explorer Galinée, in 1669, on his way to the west by way of the Seneca country, found, between the lake and the largest village to the east, beautiful broad meadows, on which the grass

¹ Sagard, *Voyage*, pt. I, p. 91.

² *Jesuit Relations*, R. G. Thwaites ed., vol. XLIII, p. 271.

³ Loskiel, *History of Mission*, pt. I, p. 68: "They preserve their crops in round holes, dug in the earth at some distance from their houses, lined and covered with dry leaves or grass. They commonly keep the situation of these magazines very secret, knowing that if they are found out, they must supply the wants of every needy neighbour as long as anything is left. These may occasion a famine, for some are so lazy that they will not plant at all, knowing that the more industrious cannot refuse to divide their store with them. The industrious, therefore, not being able to enjoy more from their labour than the idle, by degrees contract their plantations. If the winter happens to be severe, and the snow prevents them from hunting, a general famine ensues, by which many die. They are then driven by hunger to dress and eat roots of grass or the inner bark of trees, especially of young oaks."