

quires a strong granite or clay loam, which should be prepared as for corn, though we have never known flax put upon sward land. On drained land, the roots of this plant will strike very deep, so as to withstand pretty severe drought. Sow as soon after the first of May as the ground is warm and in proper condition. The old mode of gathering was by pulling it by hand—a process which farmers very much dislike. It is left upon the ground until wilted a little, and then tied in small bundles, and stooked in the field. If the weather is favorable, it will be fit to take to the barn in a few days. After remaining in an airy position there for some weeks, the seed is easily thrashed or beaten from the bolls, and then it is taken to a mowing field, and spread thinly upon the grass to go through a rotting process: this requires from ten to twenty-five days, depending much upon the state of the weather. When it has remained so long as to render the pulp, or stem part weak and brittle, it is gathered into large bundles, and stored in the barn. In the sunny days of the last of February and during March, the barn floors of New England were once the scenes of a busy activity in preparing flax for the distaff. It is first passed through the “brake,” an instrument having four or five long wooden jaws below, and another set above. The flax is placed on the lower set, and the upper ones brought down upon it, breaking the stem into pieces, which fall out, leaving the long fibre in the hand. When this is done, it is passed to the “swinging board,” and struck with a long wooden knife very smoothly polished. The “swinger” occasionally passes it through a “hatchel,” which is a group of long, sharply-pointed iron pins; this straightens the fibre, and at the same time takes away some of the fine pieces of the broken stem. In this manner the fibre is reduced to a glossy, delicate appearance, has a very soft and silky touch, and is now ready for the wheel.

A new process has been discovered of “rotting” or “bleaching” flax, so that it is accomplished at a cheap rate in a few hours, and the fibre made ready to be mixed with wool or cotton, and spun very much as cotton is. It is quite probable that this discovery may introduce the culture of flax among us again.

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SURFACE MANURING—NATURE'S MODE.

Not only with satisfaction, but with gratification, I perceive gentlemen take some exceptions to my views on surface manuring; for if what I may advance be found incorrect, either as to its facts or inferences, certainly I, as a farmer, can have no rational objection to see the reason why fairly made evident. Proceed to examine and discuss them, gentlemen, and you shall have no more attentive reader than myself; but, let me ask you, be careful not to misapprehend or misinterpret nature, who at once supplies us with facts, philosophy and example; and to imitate whom—the American Agriculturist to the contrary notwithstanding—constitutes, as to principles, the highest art which cultivators can achieve.

We have in natural marsh and swamp (briefly noticed in a former article,) notable examples of nature's mode of manuring. In marsh land (of which 100 acres of my farm is composed,) vegetable matter has for ages accumulated and formed deep beds, with but little admixture, in most instances, of mineral ingredients. These deposits bear immense growths of coarse grass, which being left on the ground, become to a large extent the *special* manure or identical substance, from which succeeding crops make their growth, with a small addition from the soil itself. Whether these mucky soils be ten feet or only ten inches in depth, makes little difference in the growth of their grass crop, for all the