



The Field.

History of the Plough.

THE first plough is supposed to have been the rude branch of a tree, cut so as to have a cleft end, the point of which, dragged along the surface of the ground, scraped a furrow, into which the seeds were thrown. It soon occurred to the husbandman that he might relieve his own labour by yoking an animal to the long arm of this primitive instrument; then arose the necessity for a handle, affixed to the back, so that the plough might be guided. The strength of the animal soon wore away or broke the cleft of the branch, and this necessarily gave rise to the invention of means to attaching a moveable share, first of wood, next of stone, copper or iron, worked to a shape adapted to the cutting of furrows, so as to avoid the excessive labour from the ploughman's having to lean upon the plough with his weight to press it into the earth. Just such an implement as these conjectures indicate was used by the Saxons. Some of the facts connected with the plough are almost incredible. In Ireland there once prevailed a custom of "ploughing by the horse's tail." The draught-pole was lashed to the tail of the horse, and as no harness was employed, two men were necessary, one to guide and press the plough, the other to direct the horse, which he did by walking backwards before the miserable animal, and beating it on the head on either side, according to the direction required. This custom prevailed for a considerable time, in spite of a law which was passed in the early part of the seventeenth century, imposing severe penalties upon persons found guilty of "ploughing by the horse's tail," as in the act mentioned and described. From "Rev. Caesar Otway's sketches in Erris and Tyrawley," it appears that that barbarous practice lingered in the remote west of Ireland as late as the year 1740. And from a paper "On the breed of horses in Scotland in the Ancient Times," printed in the first volume of the Transactions of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, we find it in that country as late as the year 1792.

The Extension of Flax Culture.

To the Editor of THE CANADIAN FARMER:

SIR,—It was with much pleasure I read the letter of your correspondent from the County of Grey, on this subject in your second issue of October. His suggestions are of great value, and worthy of general consideration with a view to their adoption. Flax culture can be generally extended in Canada by forming local associations or companies, under the Joint Stock Company Act, whose functions would be to distribute seed to the farmers, erect Scutching

Mills, and engage to purchase the crop from them at remunerative prices—the subsequent conversion of the crop being entirely managed by the companies.

I have heard that it is in contemplation to form a company in Toronto upon this plan; but there is no reason why other companies should not be formed in counties and even townships. There is room enough for all; and no fear of over-growing flax. England is now paying seven millions sterling to foreign countries for the raw material, and would I pay as much more if it could be had. There is no practical limit to the linen trade, except the supply of the raw material. There need be no apprehension that cotton will displace flax. Linen is being cheapened by manufactured processes and mechanical improvements, and cotton can never be purchased at the low prices to which the slave labor of the Southern States reduced it in the British market. The war in the United States will never terminate except by the extinction of slavery. Now is the opportunity for the Canadian farmer, and all others, interested in promoting the welfare of the country, to push forward the flax interest. There is no mystery in flax growing; but to those seeking information, either in the culture or with a view to the formation of local associations, assistance will be readily furnished on application to Box 143, Toronto. FLAXMAN.

Toronto, 29th Nov., 1864.

Why Hedges are Scarce in Canada.

To the Editor of THE CANADIAN FARMER:

SIR,—In your issue of Nov. 1st, your correspondent "H.P.H.," in his zeal for "Hedge Planting" and anxiety to see the farms of Canada divided by "Hedge Rows" with some kind of shrub of which, I think, he himself has but very imperfect conceptions, denounces the whole class of farmers as being "too lazy and too short-sighted to give the subject attention." To pronounce such an opprobrious opinion on the farmers of Canada is, I think, going a little too far, and is what they do not as a class deserve.

Although numerous experiments have been made with different plants, there has not been one found yet, that I am aware of, that has been considered worthy of general cultivation for that purpose. What the *White Willow* may do as yet, we are unable to say. The *Osage Orange*, about which there was such a cry a few years ago, has proved to be too tender. Even "the hedge-row thorn plant of the old country," as "H. P. H." denominates it, and which he says is "above all others" for that purpose, though it has been cultivated in several places in Canada by "competent hands" has been cut down by wholesale in some situations by the inclemency of a single winter. Any person may have a demonstrative proof of this fact by visiting some farms in the neighbourhood of Newmarket. Whenever there is a plant introduced into Canada that will make a good hedge and with-

stand the asperities of the climate, I have no doubt it will receive the attention and careful cultivation of a large portion of the farming community. If your readers will take the trouble to turn over the pages of THE FARMER and read a statistical report of the Agricultural productions of Upper Canada as given by Col. Johnston in his excellent address at the close of the late Provincial Fair at Hamilton, I think they will acknowledge that the "sons of the soil," as a class, are far from being a "lazy" set of men.

A FARMER.

Port Oshawa, Dec. 20, 1864

SAWED VERSUS CHOPPED WOOD.—As the value of wood is increasing, it becomes important to prepare it for market in the most economical manner. There is much waste of chips in chopping cord-wood, and besides that, a cord of wood is worth more and will go further, cut with a saw, than if cut with an axe. In chopping a tree two feet through, there is a waste of more than six out of every forty feet in reducing it to four feet lengths. Were the same tree cut by a saw, the waste would be only some two and a-half inches. Wood-sawing machines can now be had at no great cost, adapted to the same horse-power as drives the threshing-machine; and farmers who already own such horse-powers, would find it to their interest, if they have timber to spare, and a wood market near, to supply themselves with a saw-mill. The saving in the wood is surely an item worthy consideration, but in addition to that, machine labor is cheaper than hand labor. In the winter season, there are many spare days when the teams might be advantageously employed in wood-cutting for the market, as well as for the family supply.

WOOD SPLITTING.—A little common-sense philosophy would facilitate this operation very frequently. Everybody knows or ought to know, that trees increase in size by the deposit of a layer of sap between the bark and body of the tree, which sap changes to wood. One such concentric layer or ring is formed every year. Now it is easier to separate these layers than it is to split across them. The former method is called "splitting slab-fashion," the latter "splitting through the heart." Although there is no perceptible difference in splitting some kinds of wood, yet every one can see that in harmony with the law of wood growth, splitting "slab-fashion" will, as a general rule, be the easier way.

ROOTS AND THEIR MOUTHS.—A correspondent of the *Valley Farmer* very well observes, that roots, even the finest of them, have mouths, intended to eat and drink, and therefore they ought to be abundantly supplied with food and moisture. These mouths cannot talk; if they could, how often they would complain that they are left without appropriate supply. The soil should be enriched, so as to be a well-filled storehouse whence the roots of plants can draw what they need.