

*Communication to the Editor.*

## PROFESSOR SKILLING'S REPORT ON THE GREAT AMERICAN REAPING-MACHINE.

THE following valuable report is from the pen of Thomas Skilling, Esq., Professor of Agriculture, Queen's College, Galway; and we recommend its attentive perusal by our readers before they embark in any speculation with the reaping machine referred to:—

SIR—I presume you, and the readers of the GAZETTE—the landowners, gentry, and farmers of Ireland—will be anxious to hear something of the great American reaping-machine that has lately been ushered into England under such favourable auspices, and has produced such a sensation among all classes, and which occupied the attention of the leading members of the influential press in no slight degree. According to their views, this implement is to produce an entire revolution, not alone in this country, but in ours also. The British farmers is henceforth to be altogether independent of the Irish reaper, the periodical visits of whom could be readily dispensed with, were a good substitute provided; but this machine is also to be a substitute for protection, and a panacea for free trade. You are, I suppose, aware that the Royal Commissioners of the Great Exhibition, appointed judges to examine and report upon its merits, among whom were two leading members of the Royal Agricultural Society, one of them Mr. Pusey, so well known as a distinguished agriculturist and writer. These gentlemen, after trial, appear to have considered it very efficient, awarded the owner the great medal, and Mr. Pusey has since given a most favourable account of it in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, No. xxii., page 160. It appears to have acted altogether to the satisfaction of the fore-named parties; but there were certain others in England perhaps equally acute. The landowners and farmers of the north, were determined to see and judge for themselves. The East Cumberland Agricultural Society held their annual cattle and stock show at Carlisle, on the 18th instant: they hired and brought down the machine to a field in the neighbourhood, and had it tried on that, and the succeeding day, on the 19th I, with others, attended, and shall briefly detail what I saw.

The field had a moderate declivity; the crop, wheat, an average of the neighbourhood, what we would consider light, but all standing up; the ground unfavourable, being in narrow ridges, with moderately deep furrow; the plot selected was nearly square, a portion on each side, with the end ridges, having been reaped and cleared off; the machine commenced at one side, and reaped full round, was drawn by two strong horses,

which were on their mettle and distressed; up the hill, in the centre of the ridge it cut well; across the hill and ridges *badly*, and down the hill *far worse*; in fact, in the latter case, it dragged off the heads, leaving a great portion of the straw cut at various lengths; and as a gentleman, a looker on, observed, "It was like a man half shaved with a bad razor." I reckoned twenty-two persons attending it, men and women; all appeared to be very busy collecting and binding up the grain in *bundles*, not shaves, the heads and roots being somewhat equal; this is its greatest fault, delivering the grain after being cut, strewing the heads all over the ground; the persons attending could have cut the grain, at least as quickly, immensely better, and without one-fourth the loss. After it had cut once round the field, it was obvious to the most casual observer, that it was from home—out of its element—a decided failure; all present agreed in this. On the next day, the 20th, we had another fair trial, under other circumstances, and in another part of the country. The Earl of Lonsdale, for his own information, and that of his tenants and neighbours, hired, and had it brought down to Westmoreland, where it appeared before a large party of the nobility, gentry, farmers, &c., on the farm of Mr. Beanstead, near Lowther, and commenced work about eleven o'clock. This field was laid out favorably, in broad, well-formed ridges, with very shallow furrows, and was much more favourable in that respect than the one at Carlisle except being rather hilly, steep, and a much better crop, which, I could easily perceive, was against it. It cuts moderately light grain better than heavy; here it was a good, standing crop, such as a reaper would choose for a first-rate day's work; it was drawn by two very strong horses, but it would have required four. They were much distressed, and during the four hours it worked, were twice changed. As on the former day, it cut cleanly up the hill, but very badly across the ridges, particularly at the foot, where the grain was strong; and they did not *attempt to cut down the slope at all*; it would have been abortive. After two rounds of bad work, they give up cutting across also, and confined the operation to cutting up hill, going down empty. The work was continued four hours, cutting in all 9,760 square yards, or a little over two statute acres. As on former days, a great number of persons were attending, binding up, &c., in fact, a quantity that could have reaped more ground in the same time, and immensely cleaner and better. Its great fault—delivering the grain from the platform—on which it falls after being cut; this falls on the former cut ground in great disorder, strewing it over with loss heads. A trial was made to bind up some of the heaps into shaves orderly, straightening the