

THE

Canadian Agriculturist,

OR

JOURNAL AND TRANSACTIONS OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE
OF UPPER CANADA.

OL. XII.

TORONTO, JULY 16, 1860.

No. 14.

Harvest Operations.

Before this article will be in the hands of our readers the cutting of wheat, and probably in some cases early peas and barley, will have commenced over considerable areas of the country. Indeed we have already seen a sample of wheat cut in the neighbourhood of Toronto on the 11th inst., which was perfectly ripe and dry, and fit for the miller; and further to the west the season is several days in advance of this point. A good deal has been said and written on the question of the proper time for cutting wheat or other grain; some writers recommending two weeks, three weeks or a month before the grain is fully ripe, for the operation. These very early dates might answer for a moist climate, of comparatively low temperature, like that of the British Islands, where grain matures slowly. But in this country the ripening process is so rapid that, in ordinary seasons, the question is open for deliberation on the subject is very limited. On an average of seasons the length of time which elapses from the shooting of fall wheat into the ear till it becomes fully ripe and ready for the scythe, is about five, or at most six weeks. When the kernel is just about to pass the milky state and acquiring the consistency of tough dough, so that when crushed between the finger and thumb it has a greasy, sticky feeling, the crop may be cut safely. It will not lose from shrinkage cut at that period; the bran will be thinner, the flour whiter, and

the straw more valuable for fodder, and there will be less waste in gathering, than if left standing much longer. In about a week or ten days after the grain is in the state described, or if the weather is very hot, even in less time, the crop will be perfectly ripe and dry, when to leave it standing any longer would entail certain loss and increased difficulty in harvesting. The same remarks will apply, in their general principles, to the other sorts of grain.

Where fields are tolerably smooth and free from obstructions, and particularly where the breadth of crop is large, harvesting operations are very much facilitated and economized by the use of the improved reaping machines, with the addition of the raking or binding apparatus, and there is probably less waste with a good machine, than with any sort of hand labor. But where the work has to be performed by hand there is a surprising degree of difference, in regard to the preventing of waste, between the work of good hands, with proper tools, and the work of slovenly hands, with indifferent tools. Where the grain has been allowed to become too ripe, the waste is often much more than would have been paid for the work being done in the best manner, and at the best time. The sheaf should be neatly raked together, not too large, well bound, and the scatterings on the ground where it has been tied raked on into the next sheaf. Before night, or sooner if there is an appearance of rain, all that is cut should be placed in the shock, or