

minister's suggestion of making the common school grounds a means for carrying out experimental work practical, as any one who has tried to accomplish even the simple work of having the school lots planted with ordinary shade-trees will readily appreciate; but if the text books were at once established in the rural schools their most immediate benefit would be shown in their retroactive influence upon the parents of the scholars, who in return would surely be the very ones not only to assist their own children by helping to explain the rudiments of what they themselves have had laboriously to learn by years of experience, but would also assist in practically carrying out on their own farms the experiments and practices thus brought to their notice. If, however, expense in procuring the necessary books and possibly providing special instructions to the teachers are the only hindrances to this much needed reform, it can easily be shown how we are annually taxing ourselves with an unnecessary burden the saving of which would far more than pay the total expenses not only of the proposed school teaching of agriculture but of the entire costs of all school taxes, municipal taxes, and road taxes as well; I refer to the building and maintaining of all unnecessary and worse than useless farm and roadside fences but which by virtue of our present unrighteous laws we are often compelled to construct and their existence is, in many cases, about as useful today as palisades would be to keep out the Indians!

The fundamental principle of fence laws in most civilized countries is that each proprietor should prevent his animals from straying upon his neighbour's land; therefore, if a man has no animals, or if he takes other means for preventing their straying, then he certainly should not be compelled to build fences. They are not ornamental, and if he has to do so it is a most unjust tax upon him and in very many cases is of no earthly benefit to any one. Roadside fences I am happy to say are fast disappearing throughout many of our Eastern Townships just as they long since have done in so many of the New England States, and the saving which thus accrues to the farmers, and the greatly improved state of the winter roads, the causing the practice to spread far and wide and is encouraged by, and should be subsidised by all intelligent municipalities. But the boundary fence remains a heavy burden upon the farmer and a constant cause of annoyance and ill feeling between neighbours, and as "Bill Nye" once said, "I really believe the boundary fence has been the means of keeping more men out of heaven than rum has!"

In those parts of the United States where the reformed fence laws have come into force the saving in fences and in the annual cost of keeping them up has been enormous. If A keeps live stock and B does not, A has to fence his own pastures as suits him best; if both neighbours keep cattle, then they share the line fence between them under the direction of the Rural Inspector, as at present: if, after the line fence has been built either party gives up pasturing his cattle, he can, after giving six months notice to his neighbour, remove his portion of it, first however giving him the option of purchasing the same, the price being finally decided by the Rural Inspector or by arbitration; in fact so equitably has this fence law been regulated that, while an immense economy in fencing has been encouraged, there is no chance of any injustice being imposed upon

either party, and one outcome from this has been to establish the wise custom of not pasturing the after-grass on the meadows these being left entirely unfenced from one farm to the other and open to the high road as well. It is proposed, during the present session, to submit a bill tending to so far amend the existing fence laws as to allow of this most desirable economy, being practiced in those municipalities which by by-laws wish to adopt them hoping in this way to introduce the reform gradually and not too suddenly to tread upon the pot traditions of those who are wedded to this old time and unnecessary fence nuisance.

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The Farm.

Hedges.

A British immigrant of observant mind in travelling through this country notices the almost total absence of living fences, an absence greatly to be deplored for various reasons. First, no shelter is afforded to crops or cattle nor any substantial and permanent means of preventing their roaming from field to field or road. The picturesque beauty of the country (if that is of any value, and who shall aver that it is not) is marred, and the absence of hedge-rows gives it a bleak and desolate appearance.

Any one who has travelled through England, especially the Midland counties, must have been struck by the neat and garden-like aspect of the rural district encased in great measure by the dense and neatly trimmed Hawthorn hedges, which line every road and railway, and divide the land into fields. Many of these hedges are the growth of centuries and are still hale and beautiful. That they existed in the ancient Town of Sutton Coldfield, in Warwickshire, in the time of Shakespeare is evident from the fact that he mentions them in one of his plays; I think Henry V; and they are still the glory of the place. (1) And now we will briefly consider the advantages of line fences.

They are permanent, economical, and if well reared and kept, are fortresses against the North wind, the breachy ox, the midnight robber and the pilfering urchin. Stone walls alone can rival them in endurance, but they can be easily sealed while a properly grown hedge, cannot—and, then, stone walls are only practicable where stone is handy and abundant. Fences made of wood, even that least liable to decay, are a continual source of trouble and annoyance. The pickets are misplaced by frost and need adjusting every spring and even the best cedar will decay in time. Perches or rails are broken and removed by different causes, and to keep a set of wooden fences on a farm in perfect order, requires the utmost vigilance, and without these, the farm operations are subject to loss, turmoil, hindrances and vexation. Who has not suffered thus? A shower is approaching, the hay is just in splendid condition to secure, and we have all hands as busy as can be making the best use of the time before the rain comes and

spoil the crops we are priding ourselves upon—when, the news comes that the whole herd of cattle have broken into our best oats—here is a dilemma! We must either run the risk of losing a good portion of them, or spare our best hands to drive out the cattle and repair the fence.

Wire fences are an improvement on the old picket and perch system but they afford no shelter, the wooden posts rot and must be renewed. The barbed wire fence is dangerous to cattle, horses and especially bad where sheep are kept.

The time to rectify as far as practicable these defects in our system of fencing is not past, and we now consider the means by which this may be accomplished, namely by the planting of such hedge-plants as will suit various localities.

Objections no doubt will be raised as to the cost and the time it will take to rear a fence, but we must remember that the outlay is for something that will last, and capital so expended will be a good investment. Time flies, and plants grow more rapidly than we at first suppose—we shall never progress if we don't begin. Another objection would be that the planting would occupy valuable time in the busy season of spring. This would necessarily be the case, but the land could be prepared in advance when other work was not so urgent and then the actual work of planting would be quickly done; at all events it would not take more time than the repairs needed to our old fences as at present, and after a while the labour would be diminished and we should have a living mass of growth annually improving instead of a continually deteriorating and troublesome fence. It may be objected that the cost of the protection needed to raise the hedge would not warrant the outlay. It is true that a row of posts and rails would be required on each side of the hedge and a considerable strip of land occupied until it could take care of itself; but, when this is the case, the expense will cease in a great measure, and we shall have the land back with the advantages which the fence will bring. It would not be advisable for a farmer to hedge all his farm in one or more years; but he might do a small piece as opportunity offered. It would of course be a work of time, but for the good we should eventually acquire we could afford a little patience.

In England the favorite hedge-plants are the White Thorn (*Crataegus oxyacanthus*) and the Holly (*Ilex aquifolia*). The former is raised in very large quantities by men who make it a specialty and sell it when 4 years old from seed at about \$5 to \$6 a 1000. The seed is gathered in the winter, buried in the ground until the spring following the one after that in which it was gathered the previous winter. Thus, remaining in pits all the summer, it ferments, and the fruit is decayed leaving the seed free.

When planted in good ground the seed germinates quickly and makes rapid growth; hence, it has obtained the familiar name of *Quick*.

After remaining in the seed bed one year, it is transplanted into nursery rows and is sold at 2, 3 and 4 years old; usually the last.

Sometimes, seedling *quick* is planted at once in the hedge row, but the transplanted is preferred, because its roots are more fibrous and there is less risk in its final removal. Spring is usually chosen for the season of planting although some prefer the autumn.

The ground having been well cultivated, and all weeds eradicated, a trench is dug and the young plants set about

10 to 200 yard—the tops are cut off about an inch above the ground level. Manure is not as a rule put under the roots except it be very rotten, but if the season is likely to be dry, a light mulching is used on the surface.

The plants thus cut send up several shoots making the hedge thick at the bottom, a very important consideration, and in some cases, where expense is not spared a double row is planted, alternating the sets with each other. Weeds are rigorously expelled the first summer and a good top-dressing of partially decayed manure applied. When the hedge has been growing two or three years, some growers subject it to what is technically called *pleaching* or *laying*. This is done by cutting out, level with earth, a certain number of shoots—cutting the remainder about half through, and laying them down flat, winding them through and through, a row of stakes which is placed to hold them in position, this may seem to retard the growth of the hedge for a time, but it will be ultimately the better for it, growing so much thicker.

A good hedge layer on a farm is looked upon as a valuable assistant, as to do the work quickly and well, requires a certain amount of judgment and mechanical skill. The hedge will now require attention as to clipping and putting into shape as it grows. This used to be done in the winter, but many prefer the spring, because the new shoots commence growing at once. The object always to be aimed at is to induce the plants to thicken at the bottom and to form a wedge at the top. A properly trained hedge will be in this form. If cut annually, it is not much work to keep it so; but if neglected it will lose its symmetry and require much labor to restore it. Such a hedge is by far the best defence, and imports a degree of neatness and beauty to a farm by no means to be despised. A well fenced farm will be enhanced in value beyond the cost of making the fences.

The plants I have mentioned (*the quick*) are, unfortunately, not suited to our climate, but we have other species which will do as well. The cockspur Thorn (*Crataegus oxyacanthus*) is indigenous, and although it is a much stronger grower than the English Hawthorn, it is capable of being made useful as a hedge plant, and, if subjected to the same systematic treatment, would be found very serviceable for the purpose.

If on farms where these grow, the owner would gather some of the haws late in the fall, bury them as described, and plant the seed, they would have plants which they would find useful in many cases, even if they did not go into hedge making extensively.

Another valuable deciduous shrub is the three thorned acacia (*Robinia triacanthus*). This can be made a most formidable means of defence by judicious trimming, and careful attention for a few years: its thorns render it dangerous to approach, much less to attempt a passage through, so on some lands, it is preferable to the thorn.

Buckthorn is also used in some localities, but it is doubtful if it is hardy enough to stand the cold of this Province; at least of the Eastern and North Eastern part of it.

For an evergreen dense hedge, the spruce is unequalled, and soon forms an excellent fence. If allowed to grow tall, it is, *par excellence*, the best wind-break, and if planted in double lines and kept closely clipped every year it forms a mass of verdure so thick that no living creature can pass through it. And such a one as I lately saw at the

(1) "Her hedges even-pleached—
Like prisoners widdly overgrown with
[hair, put forth]
Disordered twigs. Hen. V. Act V. Sc 2

"I will but look upon the hedge, and
follow you." Twelfth night. Act IV, Sc 3
In Kent we still talk of a "well pleached"
(or *pleached*) hedge. En.