

MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT.

Improvement in Hemp-Brakes.

We copy the following description and illustrations of an improved Hemp-Brake from the "Farmers Library and Monthly Journal of Agriculture." It is a matter which will interest, and perhaps benefit, many of our readers.—John S. Skinner, Esq.—*Dear Sir*:—I send you the description and drawings of a Hemp-Gin, invented and recently patented by my brother, Franklin P. Holcomb, under the following circumstances: My brother, who is a civil engineer by profession, but possessing fine mechanical talents, was stopping with me at my farm, when I happened one day to be reading, from the Farmer's Encyclopædia, what Mr. Clay says in an article he furnished to that work on the subject of Hemp-Machines, which is to the effect that no machine had ever been invented, and he feared none ever would be, to answer as a substitute for the hand-brake. I told my brother that he owed it to the fact of his having been a farmer's boy to supply, if possible, this great desideratum to the hemp-growing interest; and also expressed the opinion that we might probably grow hemp here to advantage, if the breaking and scutching could be done by machinery.

He finally went to work at it, and I sowed a small quantity of hemp, which we water-rotted. This we got out with the machine. Still he did not think it perfect or right, and went on improving, and altering, and experimenting, for almost another twelve-month; and meantime I grew a second crop of hemp for him. This we also got out with the machine, and had a portion of it manufactured into rope. And, finally, the great difficulty that had troubled him so much—the waste in the scutching—was overcome, and we had the satisfaction of seeing this simple little machine break and scutch, with the least possible waste, at the rate of about, 1,000 lbs. of clean, merchantable hemp per day—doing the work of some twelve or fourteen men.

But meantime Mr. Billing's machine had made its appearance; and our friend Gen. Tallmadge had commended it so highly in his Address before the American Institute, that my brother, supposing the final object had been attained, and never having entertained any pecuniary views in connection with it, proposed doing nothing farther with his machine. But he subsequently learned

that Mr. Billing's machine, though no doubt an excellent one, was large, somewhat complicated, and costing four or five times the price of his, and probably intended rather for a stationary power to work in a manufactory, than for the general use of hemp-growers, to be worked by their hands, on the plantation, or in the fields. Under the circumstances he applied for a patent, which was granted, and Mr. Obed Hussey, of Baltimore, machinist, the ingenious inventor of the Reaping Machine, has become interested in it, and will take means to introduce it to the attention of the hemp-growers of the West.

Nothing can be more simple in its construction, The rudest and roughest hands can work it, and with little danger of its getting out of order. The cost of it will only be from \$75 to \$100, exclusive of the horse-power. It requires about a two horse power to work it. From my own experience in the use of it, I can confidently say, and assure my brother farmers of the West, that the largest crop of hemp they grow would hold out no terror, so far as the breaking and scutching of it was concerned, with the use of this machine. My clear conviction is, that it will go into very general use in the hemp districts, and prove an important acquisition to this branch of Agriculture; and if it does, though not having the slightest pecuniary interest in it, I shall feel myself highly rewarded for the interest I have taken in the enterprise.

Truly yours.

CHAUNCEY P. HOLCOMB.

Devondale Farm, near Newcastle, Del., 1847.

SPECIFICATION OF HOLCOMB'S HEMP-BRAKE.

To all to whom these presents shall come:

Be it known, that I, F. P. Holcomb, of the town and county of Newcastle, and State of Delaware, have invented a new and useful machine for breaking and cleaning hemp at one and by the same operation, and that the following is a full, clear and exact description of the principle or character which distinguishes it from all other things before known, and of the manner of making, constructing, and using the same, reference being had to the accompanying drawings, making part of this specification, in which fig. 43 is a perspective view, and figure 49 a verticle section of the machine. The same letters indicate like parts in all the figures.