

clean it thoroughly from weeds and roots. Following the last harrowing, it is necessary to roll, to give an even surface, and consolidate the land, breaking this up again with a short-toothed, or seed harrow, ere sowing.

SOWING.

The seed best adapted for the generality of soils is Riga, although Dutch has been used in many districts of country, for a series of years, with perfect success. American seed does not generally suit well, as it is apt to produce a coarse, branchy stem. If used, it should only be on deep loamy soils. Select plump, shining, heavy seed, of the best brands, from a respectable merchant. Sift it clear of all the seeds of weeds, which will save a great deal of after trouble, when the crop is growing. This may be done by fanners, and through a wire sieve, twelve bars to the inch. Home-saved seed, grown from foreign, has been used, in many cases, with success. It is suggested that a small portion of the crop may be allowed to stand, until the seed be fully ripe, and then pulled, and the seed preserved for sowing; but the seed saved from it, in the following year, should only be used for feeding, or sold for the oil-mills. The proportion of seed may be stated at three-and-a-half Imperial bushels to the Irish or Plantation acre; and so on in proportion to the Scotch or Cunningham, and the English or Statute measure. It is better to sow too thick than too thin; as, with thick sowing, the stem grows tall and straight, with only one or two seed capsules at the top, and the fibre is found greatly superior in fineness and length, to that produced from thin sown flax, which grows coarse, and branches out, producing much seed, but a very inferior quality of fibre. The ground being pulverized and well cleaned, roll and sow. After sowing, cover it with a seed harrow, going twice over it,—once up and down, and once across or anglewise; as this makes it more easily spread, and avoids the small drills made by the teeth of the harrow. Finish with the roller, which will leave the seed covered about an inch, the proper depth. The ridges should be very little raised in the centre, when the ground is ready for the seed, otherwise the crop will not ripen evenly; and when land is properly drained, there should be no ridges. The sowing of clover and grass-seeds along with the flax is not advised, when it can be conveniently avoided, as these plants always injure the root ends of the flax. But carrots may be sown on suitable soils, in drills, so that the person pulling the flax may step over the rows, which may be afterwards hoed and cleaned, and should have some liquid manure. A stolen crop of rape or Winter vetches may be taken after the flax. Rolling the ground, after sowing, is very advisable, care being taken not to roll, when the ground is so wet, that the earth adheres to the roller.

WEEDING.

If care has been paid to cleaning the seed and the soil, few weeds will appear; but if there be any, they must be carefully pulled. It is done, in Belgium, by women and children, who, with coarse cloths round their knees, creep along on all-fours; this injures the young plant less than walking over it (which, if done, should be by persons whose shoes are not filled with nails;) they should work, also, facing the wind, so that the plants, laid flat by the pressure, may be blown up again, or thus be assisted to regain their upright position. The tender plant, pressed one way, soon recovers; but, if twisted or flattened by careless weeders, it seldom rises again.

PULLING.

The time when flax should be pulled is a point of much nicety to determine. The fibre is in the best state, before the seed is quite ripe. If pulled too soon, although the fibre is fine, the great waste in scutching and hackling renders it unprofitable; and, if pulled too late, the additional yield does not compensate for the coarseness of the fibre. It may be stated, that the best time for pulling is, when the seeds are beginning to change from a green to pale brown colour, and the stalks to become yellow, for about two-thirds of its height from the ground. When any of the crop is lying, and suffering from wet, it should be pulled as soon as possible, and kept by itself. So long as the ground is undrained, and imperfectly levelled before sowing, the flax will be found of different lengths. In such case, pull each length separately, and steep in separate pools, or keep it separate, in the same pool. If the ground has been thorough-drained, and laid out evenly, the flax will be all of the same length. It is most essential to take time and care to keep the flax even, *like a brush*, at the root ends. This increases the value to the spinner, and, of course, to the grower, who will be amply repaid, by an additional price for his extra trouble. Let the handfulls of pulled flax be laid across each other, diagonally, to be ready for the

RIPLING,

Which should be carried on at the same time, and in the same field, with the pulling. If the only advantage to be derived from rippling was the comparative ease with which rippled flax is handled, the practice ought always to be adopted. But, besides this, the seed is a most valuable part of the crop, being worth, if sold for the oil-mills £3 per acre; and, if used for feeding stock, of all kinds, at least £4 per acre. The apparatus is very simple. The ripple consists of a row of iron teeth screwed into a block of wood. This can be procured in Belfast, or may be made by any handy blacksmith.* It is to be taken to the field, where the flax is being pulled, and screwed down to the centre of a nine-foot plank, resting on two stools. The rippers may either stand, or sit astride at opposite ends. They should be at such a distance from the comb, as to permit of their striking it properly and alternately. A winnowing sheet must be placed under them, to receive the bolls as they are rippled off; and then they are ready to receive the flax just pulled,—the handfulls being placed diagonally, and bound up in a sheaf. The sheaf is laid down at the right hand of the rippler, and untied. He takes a handful with one hand, about six inches from the root, and a little nearer the top, with the other. He spreads the top of the handfull like a fan, draws the one-half of it through the comb, and the other half past the side; and, by a half turn of the wrist, the same operation is repeated with the rest of the bunch. Thus the flax can be rippled without being passed more than once through the comb. He then lays the handfulls down at his left side, *each handfull* crossing the other, when the sheaf should be carefully tied up and removed. The object of crossing the handfulls so carefully, after rippling, when tying up the beets for the steep, is, that they will part freely from each other, when they are taken to spread out

*The best ripples are made of $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch square rods of iron placed with the angles of iron next the ripples, 3.16-ins of an inch asunder at the bottom, $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch at the top, and 18 inches long, to allow a sufficient spring, and save much breaking of flax.