

THE FARMER AND MECHANIC,

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The Cultivation of Flax and Hemp as preparative Crops for Fall Wheat.

From articles in our former numbers, the readers of "The Farmer and Mechanic" are doubtless aware that its Editor and Compiler is strongly of opinion that summer fallowing land, as a means of preparing it for fall wheat, may be almost, if not entirely, dispensed with, without operating prejudicially to the land. By repeated experiments, and closely observing the practice of many of the best farmers that can be found on this continent, this opinion has been maturely and carefully formed. It is likewise believed, that by adopting the course of farming submitted for public inspection in this Journal, that the land will annually improve in quality, and at the same time yield much larger returns, at, at least, a third less cost, than what are realised by the systems—if such they may be called—that are in general practice. The incredulity of mankind is such, that it is not likely many will be disposed to at once countenance so strange a doctrine. The views entertained by the writer, as has been shown by what has already been published in this Magazine, will be clearly and forcibly expressed, so that those who entertain different views may comprehend what has been advanced, and an opportunity will be given to all who take exceptions to our arguments, so that what can be said for or against the two systems may be published, for the benefit of the general reader. A fairer proposition than that of inviting free discussion, when a question of such vital importance to the country as the one alluded to, is to be discussed, cannot be made. It must not be taken for granted, that any farmer, no matter how abundant his capital, broad his fields, and diversified his soils, can put all in practice, that is advanced by those who have charge of the Agricultural Press; but, nevertheless, it is well that every individual who obtains his livelihood by the plough should have a thorough knowledge of every branch of his

business, whether he be prepared to practice them all or not. With this explanation of our intentions and objects, which shall be more fully developed in the future papers that we propose to prepare on the various modes of conducting the operations on the farm, by which the expensive practice of making naked summer fallows may be avoided, without curtailing the profits of the farm; we shall advance a few reasons why the cultivation of flax and hemp might be grown upon a very large scale in this country, as preparative crops for fall wheat, or as substitutes for a naked fallow. As these remarks are written by a practical farmer, who practices and understands what he preaches, they will assume an appearance of written directions to those who may not be so well acquainted with the subject as the writer supposes himself to be. To prevent confusion to the reader, as the mode of cultivation of the two plants differ, a few brief directions will be given under their respective heads:—

CULTIVATION OF FLAX.

An acre of land in Canada will yield twenty bushels of seed and four hundred pounds of marketable fibre. The seed is worth one dollar per bushel, for the purpose of being manufactured into linseed oil, and the fibre will command ten dollars per 100 lbs. if of a fair, good quality, to be exported to Great Britain, for the manufactory of linen. Thus the produce of an acre of this crop will yield sixty dollars, one-half of which will be costs, and the other half profits. Thirty bushels of seed and six hundred pounds of fibre have been repeatedly harvested per acre in this country; but an average beyond that first mentioned need not be expected, unless under very favourable circumstances.

The flax plant requires a very deep, rich, well cultivated clay loam,—a soil, in fact, which would be sufficiently rich to produce from eighty to ninety bushels of oats per acre, by two or at the outside three ploughings, in a favourable year for that crop. Many run away with