

horn about the year 1820, led to many attempts being made to produce an article resembling them in England. Every encouragement was offered by the Society of Arts to parties trying to grow straws like those in Italy, and then making a similar article to the Leghorn hat. A Mr. Parry received the Society's large silver medal in 1822, for his method of manufacturing Leghorn plait from straw imported from Italy. No person succeeded so well, however, as the late Mr. Thos. Waller, of Luton. This gentleman first imported seeds of the Italian Wheat, and endeavoured to raise straws from it in the neighbourhood of Luton, but being beaten by the uncertainty of climate, he hit upon the expedient of using straws imported from Italy. He obtained a patent for a bonnet made by plaiting eleven Tuscan straws, called by him the "Tuscan Grass Bonnet," which was afterwards patronized by Queen Adelaide, and great numbers were sold all over the kingdom at prices from 30s. to 50s. each.

From the time of making the first single plait, called split, at the commencement of the present century, many fancy kinds of plait were invented in the split straw. Similar fancy plaits and trimmings followed, termed "Patent Dunstable."

Between the years 1844 and 1850, other and more important plaits were invented known as China Pearl, Coburg, Vienna, and Brussels, each being distinguished by some particular form. The demand for the cheap plait composed of coloured and white straws was very great. But the most important of double plaits is that termed twist edge, also named whipcord edge, from the fact of the straw being whipped over as it were. It is also made in the whole-pipe seven and 11 straws, and is a staple article of English wear, forming the true straw bonnet, by exhibiting English straw to the best advantage. The discovery of this valuable plait has been attended with happy results, as it is a description capable of being used in almost every kind of hat or bonnet.

These various descriptions of straw plaits have enabled the trade to produce so many novelties that Tuscan plaits have declined as articles of wear; and although the lowering and afterwards abolition of the duties on foreign Tuscan brought that article into competition with the English straw manufacture, no injury has been sustained by the straw trade.

From the date of the Great Exhibition in 1851, plaiting has continued to progress, not so much in the invention of a number of new plaits, as in the superior quality and extent of the manufacture, and such has been the determination of our manufacturers to meet the public taste and the necessities of the million, that although foreign straw plaits from Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, have

been brought to compete with them, they have nearly all failed in this respect.

Straw plait is a domestic manufacture, carried on in the cottages of the agricultural labourers of the three counties of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Buckinghamshire, and portions of Essex and Suffolk. The plaiters are generally the wives and children of the labourers; a few are men. No plait is made in factories.

Children are taught usually in schools, and are sent at the early age of four years; besides plaiting, they are taught spelling and reading. In most villages there is a plaiting school, which is generally conducted by an elderly dame, who receives from each scholar 2d. or 3d. per week. The children are some time before they can plait so as to earn anything, but after a year or two they can contrive to obtain 6d. to 1s. 6d. per week, after their plait is disposed of by their parents. They remain at school the usual school hours; afterwards, during the time they do not play, they plait a little till sent to rest. They continue working at school till they can plait sufficiently well, and when they are above eight or nine years they earn 2s. to 3s. per week. On leaving school they earn 4s. to 5s. if expert plaiters, and after they become skilful they may obtain as much as 7s. Many learn to sew, if near Luton or Dunstable, and then leave their cottage home for the greater attraction of hat and bonnet sewing, a sewer being considered a step above a plaiter; and one who may exhibit an amount of personal adornment to which a simple plaiter would not dare to aspire in her village home.

Plait is made all the year round, except harvest time. In winter plait is made indoors, and as the splints have to be worked in a partially wet condition, it is cold work for the fingers. When plaiting near the fire the straws are liable to injury; winter-made plait is never so good as when it is done in spring and summer, away from the fire or in the open air, at the cottage door, or along the green lane.

The earnings of a good plaiter, after the straws are deducted, will be from 5s. to 7s. 6d. per week, in a good state of trade.

It is computed that the number of females engaged in plaiting, and boys up to eight years of age, would now be near to 50,000, and the number of yards annually made 200,000,000 or 10,000,000 scores of plait of every description.—*Gardener's Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette.*

**DOGS vs. SHEEP.**—During the past month several sheep have been killed by dogs in the parish of Sackville. At Hammond's Plains there are so many dogs that sheep cannot be kept at all.

### Miscellaneous.

#### REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE CROPS, &c.

HALIFAX, 21st June, 1865.

The present season is, in several respects, a peculiar one. The spring opened very early, with an unusually long course of dry weather in April, which was succeeded by a period of wet in May of equally unusual duration, followed by a few hot days, and then, in June, up to the present date, alternations of warm and coldish weather, with but little rain.

Judging from the time of flowering of wild plants in the woods, and other natural phenomena usually regarded as accurate indices of the advancement of the season, the present season is, in Halifax county, about seven, and certainly not more than ten, days in advance of last year. But farm crops show, even on an average, a greater advance than this, and the present appearance of some crops indicates a difference of two or three weeks. This anomaly arises partly from the season favoring the advancement of certain crops more than others, and partly from the readiness with which wide-awake farmers took advantage of the peculiarities of the season, to forward their spring cropping. The present season has forcibly taught the farmer that Time, like a loose horse in the pasture, must be taken by the forelock.

The HAY CROP had a very early start, and the plentiful supply of rain in May caused a rapid and abundant growth, especially where top-dressings had been given during the previous autumn. In the salt marshes the hay is very thick and strong, and will soon require the application of the scythe, and on uplands, there are likewise unusually heavy crops. Red Clover, Kentucky Blue Grass and Fox tail are now in full flower in the hay-fields, and in light sandy soils, the white clover is blooming before its time. Timothy is stooling out in a luxuriant manner, giving promise of a heavy crop. The Clover is so rank that on some farms it has been cut and fed to cattle, in hope of a second cutting. Upon the whole there is every prospect of a heavy hay crop generally throughout the Province. There are complaints, however, that the hay is more weedy than usual. "Ill weeds grow apace." This is attributed to the wet spring, but is more likely to have been caused by the favourableness of last summer for ripening the seeds of field weeds.

There is one weed to which the attention of every farmer ought to be directed for its prevalence in our hay-fields is to be attributed the bad flavor of some of the butter sold in Halifax, viz: the caraway. When caraway is eaten by