



Vol. II. No. 5.

TORONTO, UPPER CANADA, MARCH 1, 1865.

POSTAGE FREE.

The Field.

The Art of Chopping.

Chopping is an art, and one that is not to be acquired in a day. Those who have handled the axe from earliest childhood, and become familiar with its management, have little idea of the awkwardness felt by those who make their first attempt at chopping, after having arrived at mature years. However, with a little perseverance, the art may soon be acquired by parties who have been accustomed to handle tools of a very different description. There is, however, a great difference in the facility and effectiveness with which people handle the axe. One man will chop much faster and more neatly than another. Nor is it merely a question of muscular strength. Skill has far more to do with it. A small man, possessing apparently but little strength, will often chop twice as much as a burly, powerful fellow who "hasn't got the hang of it," as backwood-men would say. It is difficult to prescribe rules for handling the axe properly. An easy swing obtained by straightening the back at every stroke, and throwing the axe well up into the air; a straight aim, firm grasp of the handle hilt in one hand, and quick, free motion with the other, perfect elasticity in the arms, and the avoidance of all stiff, rigid movements,—these are the chief requirements. But, after all, there is a certain knack which only intuitive perception, and intelligent practice, can give. We are not sure but the true chopper, like the true poet, is "born, not made."



Our engraving exhibits two men in the act of felling a tree. The scene finely illustrates the first steps in the process of clearing land. We are to suppose that the heroes of our picture have taken up a lot of land in the unbroken forest, and are in the act of beginning to rid it of its timber, as a preparation for tilling the soil. Generally speaking, chopping is a winter job. Other work is scarce at that season in the newer parts of the country; and by proper manage-

ment, what is chopped in winter can be got ready for a crop during the following summer or fall, if not indeed in the spring. As there is usually more or less snow on the ground during the winter months, it is very important to have the land intended to be cleared, nicely underbrushed the previous fall. Twigs, saplings, and the smaller trees,—those not more than about six inches through, should be cut close to the ground, in order to facilitate dragging in the first

sometimes be indicated by a slight lean on the part of the trees, and more distinctly perhaps, by the inclination of the tops. The importance of this examination will appear in connexion with the process of burning off. In commencing a piece of chopping, the largest and most unmanageable tree, say a great Water Elm or Oak, should be felled first, and if the prevailing wind be from the North-West, the tree should, if possible, be made to fall toward the South-

East. Then by carefully cutting the rest of the trees within reach of the elm or oak, they will all fall with their tops on the first tree felled—the trunks forming various angles with that of the first tree chopped down. As each tree is felled, the branches should be all cut off so as to form a compact mass. Where the timber is thick, these heaps will be nearly, if not quite, close enough to walk over through the entire extent of the fallow. When the time for burning arrives, the fire will run with the wind lengthwise of the heaps, consuming all before it, and often leaving a clear lane;—brush, tops, and even the smaller logs being burnt out of the way. When a tree is bent so as to fall the wrong way, it will often reach another row, or if the inclination be not too decisive its course may be directed by the use of a "spring pole," as it is called. This is a light, tough pole, about 25 feet long, with a strong, sharp spike in the small end, protected from splitting by a ferule. When used, it is placed on the side of the tree opposite to that toward which the tree should fall, the spike thrust into the tree about 20 feet from the ground, and the bottom end jerked toward the stump of the tree. A small rope may be attached about half way up the pole, and fast-

ened round the stump below the place where it is being cut off. By doing this tightly, the pole will bend, and all its elasticity made to contribute toward forcing the tree to fall in the desired direction. The use of the "spring-pole," requires much judgment and caution. A tree will usually fall on that side of the stump which is cut the lowest. If it be desired to throw a tree in a given direction, let it be first cut on that side three or four inches lower down than on

tened round the stump below the place where it is being cut off. By doing this tightly, the pole will bend, and all its elasticity made to contribute toward forcing the tree to fall in the desired direction. The use of the "spring-pole," requires much judgment and caution. A tree will usually fall on that side of the stump which is cut the lowest. If it be desired to throw a tree in a given direction, let it be first cut on that side three or four inches lower down than on