

for a Boss Farmer in the Cabinet until the general Government goes into business as an active tiller of the soil." There already exists in the United States a Commissioner of Agriculture, and it is boldly affirmed that the office is practically useless. The *New York Tribune* affirms that no sensible farmer will admit that the office has ever been worth the price of a pint of beans to him, and declares that neither the present Commissioner nor any of his predecessors has ever caused two blades of grass to grow in place of one. It adds in regard to the sensible farmer, "He might be content to see the concern shrivel and vanish; he certainly never would pray for any more of it."

#### HORTICULTURAL JUSTICE.

A man named John Harrison has been imprisoned in Newark, New Jersey, for obtaining money under false pretences, by selling the seeds of a wonderful plant which he warranted to grow into a bush that would burst into beautiful and fragrant bloom, and ultimately bear a crop of "wash-rags." The plant thus advertised is supposed to be a vine that grows wild in the West Indies, bearing a gourd-like fruit, the spongy lining of whose rough shell is used by the natives to brush out their huts, and perform various culinary services. Barring the fact that the plant is only suited to a tropical climate, the "pretences" made by this Harrison do not appear to have been equal in falsity to those of many itinerant and irresponsible vendors of trees and plants who are permitted to enjoy their liberty. The man recently exposed by Peter Henderson, who sold at \$10 a rose plant that was to bear a blue flower, is far more deserving of imprisonment. Impossible horticultural novelties are constantly being offered for sale to a public easily gulled, and, according to Baruum, fond of being humbugged. People who can read advertisements of trees, plants, and flowers with responsible names attached to them, without any desire to purchase, are seized with an irresistible impulse to buy when some vagrant impostor proclaims wonders of the vegetable world unknown even to the garden of Eden. The *New York Tribune*, in commenting on this John Harrison case, well remarks:

"When good people are solicited to invest in some horticultural eccentricity, it is a proper time for them to remember that there is no seed, plant, shrub or tree having any economic or ornamental value in this climate which cannot be procured of trustworthy seedsmen, florists and nurserymen. The enterprise of these dealers makes it certain that they will have every novelty in the trade which has any value as soon as it can be procured, besides a good many novelties which have no value. It is a pretty safe rule for one who is attacked by the planting fever to buy nothing which has not an approved and firmly established worth, and to buy exclusively of responsible and regular dealers."

#### JONES'S NEW HONEY KNIFE.

We have received from Mr. D. A. Jones, of Beeton, Ont., a sample of a new honey knife manufactured expressly for him in Sheffield, England. Bee-keepers of course understand,

though the general public do not, that a honey knife is used for uncapping the sealed sheets of comb in order to extract the honey. It is a delicate operation, and requires a knife of peculiar construction. There are several styles of honey knife in the market, but this is far away ahead of any that we have seen or used, and we think we have inspected, if not tried, them all. Should we have any honey to extract the coming season, we anticipate much satisfaction in operating with the new Jones knife, and we unhesitatingly recommend it to all our bee-keeping readers.

#### PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

ILLUSTRATED DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF Farm, Garden, and Flower Seeds. (William Evans, Montreal.)—Mr. Evans is a trustworthy seedsman, and those who deal with him will have no cause to regret doing so. He is agent for the Planet Jr. Farm and Garden Implements, and encloses a pamphlet concerning them with his catalogue.

DODGE'S CATALOGUE AND PRICE LIST. Bees, Apiarian supplies, and small fruits. (Fredonia, N. Y.)

FRUIT NOTES. (Robt. Johnston, Shortsville, Ont. Co., N. Y.)—Devoted to small fruits.

REPORT OF THE AGRICULTURAL AND ARTS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO FOR 1881. (Reserved for notice hereafter.)

#### SKETCHES OF CANADIAN WILD BIRDS.

BY W. L. KELLS, LISTOWEL, ONT.

##### THE CARRION CROW.

This gregarious and carrion-devouring bird is very numerous in Canada, and frequents the neighbourhood of towns and cities as well as the woodland regions. The crow is greedy and voracious, and in regard to its food represents many of the feathered race. It will feed on all kinds of dead animal matter, and sometimes attacks and destroys small animals and young birds; in fact, frogs, snakes and other reptiles, worms and insects, grain and fruit, and the eggs of wild and domestic fowl, are all eagerly devoured by this black-coated *Polyborus*. It may be daily seen, during the summer season, roaming along the roads and over the fields in quest of prey, digging up the ground where it has discovered grubs at work, pulling down ant-hills, turning over sods and stones, or hovering along the banks of creeks and rivers, in search of crabs, clams, and dead fish; and woe to the young fowl that may have become disabled! for it is soon torn in pieces and devoured by the merciless crow. When the breeding season is over and the young are able to fly, these birds often assemble in large flocks, and sometimes commit havoc in the pea fields. While thus employed, some of their number are stationed as sentinels to give an alarm in case of approaching danger, and when disturbed the whole flock rise in a body, and make for the woods, uttering loud and clamorous notes. After all, the crow is of more benefit than injury to the farmer; for most of the creatures upon which it preys, if permitted to increase, would do harm to the crops, and in some cases render vain the prospect of a harvest. Besides, the dead and decaying matter upon

which it loves to feed, if not removed, would taint the air, and become a prolific source of disease and death. Above all, the carrion-devouring propensities of the crow were given him by the Great Author of Nature, and should not therefore be disparaged by man. The crow is also a cunning and cautious bird, for the most tempting bait and pressing hunger will not allure him to the snare if there is the least appearance of danger. It is also a bold and affectionate bird, and will try to assist a wounded companion, or protect its young to the best of its ability. The eye of the crow has a fierce look; its senses of sight and hearing are keen; and when it has seized anything too large to be swallowed whole, it beats it in pieces with its large and powerful beak. Its watchfulness is remarkable; and the hunter has much difficulty in getting near enough to shoot it, for the sight of a stick, carried like a gun, is sufficient to set a thousand wings in motion. The rambling fox, as well as the owl and the larger species of the hawks, also excite its fears, and its prolonged "cawing" always indicates the presence of some of these marauders. It is very tenacious of life, and except a wing is broken or the head shattered, it will, when wounded, try to escape, so that comparatively few of them are destroyed. The plumage of the crow is dark black, the neck having a greenish glossy hue. Its length is above twenty inches. It begins to build its nest early in March, and in June the young are able to fly. When captured young, it is easily tamed, but makes a rather mischievous pet. The nest is placed in the fork, or among the thick branches of large high trees, where few would dare to climb; it is formed of sticks and mud, lined with dry grass, moss and leaves. The eggs, four to five in number, are of a greenish hue, mottled with brown spots. It does not appear to hatch more than once in the season. The crow is shy in winter, but becomes bolder as the spring approaches, and often alights to feed in the barn-yard, and in the field surrounding the farm homestead. This change of habit is caused by the desire of procuring food for its young, which are voracious enough to tax all the energies of the parents. The crow is the great and determined opponent of the hawk tribe, and may often be seen, particularly in the breeding season, as it with loud "caws" and circling flight mounts the air in pursuit of the kite-hawk. The crow, by rising above the hawk and darting downward, endeavours to drive him off; but the hawk seeming to pay little attention, except by moving aside to avoid the stroke, still continues to rise higher in the air, until the combatants are lost to sight among the clouds. It may happen that the hawk, in the absence of the crow, sometimes descends upon its nest and robs it of its young; for a fat young crow is as pleasing to the appetite of the hawk, as the oyster to the epicure. The crow knows this, and is by no means willing to gratify the carnivorous propensities of its mortal foe; hence an endless warfare is waged between these tribes. And even when the young crows are able to fly, if a hawk makes its appearance in the vicinity, the battle-cry is raised and the whole fraternity summoned to the contest. The hawk is then compelled to