

THE
Canadian Agriculturist,

AND

JOURNAL OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

OF UPPER CANADA.

VOL. XI.

TORONTO, JULY, 1859.

No. 7.

HARVEST WORK.

We have nearly approached that interesting and important season of the Agricultural year,—the grain harvest,—round which so many pleasing and poetical associations combine, and in which, as the realization of the husbandman's labors, the hopes of all classes of the community for the restoration of the prosperity of the Province are mainly based. A few practical remarks in relation to this department of Agricultural labour, will not be considered as inopportune.

First, as to the proper time for cutting grain. In general farmers allow their grain to get too ripe before they begin their harvest operations; and the loss from this practice is, when all things are duly considered, much greater than most people imagine. It has been ascertained by the most careful experiments made in the field and in the laboratory, that wheat, for instance, yields the largest amount of the best quality of flour, when it is cut a few days before it is fully ripe; and the reason assigned is that the grain in ripening loses a certain amount of starch and sugar, which is converted into woody fibre, a substance comparatively innutritious. It has long been known to practical men that the grain when fully ripe is thicker in the bran and has a coarser surface or cuticle than when cut in a somewhat greenish state. Wheat, therefore, when dead ripe contains less flour and more bran, and the straw for the same reason is less nutritious as fodder. In this hot and forcing climate, where it is almost impossible to overtake harvest work when it is not commenced betimes, and much of the best grain is lost by shelling out in the field, it is a matter of great practical importance to determine the proper time for commencing harvest operations. If wheat be intended for seed, then the grain should be allowed to ripen fully before cutting, but for converting into flour, it is in the best condition for reaping as soon as the berries have fairly got out of the milky state and have attained to a moderate state of hardness, and the straw has assumed a yellowish colour. If wheat, however, be cut when too green, the grain will shrivel in harvesting, and the sample will be of less commercial value. On an extensive farm where several varieties of wheat are usually cultivated, and soils differ, it will seldom if ever happen that the whole will ripen precisely at the same time. By beginning, therefore, to cut the forwardest before it is fully ripe, with the present improved