

RURAL ECONOMY—THORN HEDGES.

To the Editor of the Canadian Agriculturist :

SIR,—Last month I sent a few random thoughts on the "Farmers' Prospects," which I see you have been kind enough to publish, and at the same time I intimated my intention to address you, on some future occasion, on the subject of "Live Fences."

Now, sir, it is evident to every thinking mind that this subject must soon force itself upon the mind of the practical farmer—must soon become one of vital importance—and whether he receive it or no, the stubborn fact stares him in the face, and he cannot get over it. I have often wondered, when looking over the various addresses, discussions, reports, &c., which appear from time to time in the *Agriculturist*, that this question should have been overlooked. The all-absorbing topic of conversation in a new settlement is, "Well, neighbor, how many acres do you intend to clear next season?" "Well, I don't know," replies the other, "I'll underbrush five or six acres this fall, anyhow,—and if the snow doesn't fall too deep, I think, by changing work with some of my neighbors, I will be able to manage it, and if I get a good burn I will have ground enough for all the wheat I want to sow, besides reserving a good potato patch; and if I can only get rails enough split to build a good fence to keep out the neighbors' cattle, I will have a fine lot of wheat to sell next winter." Just so, sir, a first rate, your plans are well arranged, couldn't be beat, what care you for thorn hedges, or anything else of the kind, so long as you have more rail timber than you can destroy; but hold on, the time is coming when the old woods which have so suitably retired before the sturdy strokes of your axe must be either replaced by new ones which is not likely, or you must find a substitute for rail timber, which may be rather difficult. And then, again, in old settled townships, where you will not see a stump, perhaps, on a farm, let a few farmers get together, and what are they talking about? About the price of wheat, and whether it is likely to rise or fall. About the number of acres each of them has summer fallowed. About the pedigree and raising of horses. About the superiority of Short-horns, or Herefords, or Ayrshires, over all the other breeds of cattle. About the different breeds of sheep. About the breed of hogs that is easiest to fatten. About the different kinds of manure and its application to different soils. About the kind of ploughs they use, and which does the best work. About making roads, building bridges, draining swamps, &c., and it might be they would even extend their discussions to telegraph lines and railroads, as to whether the former was a paying concern or not, and whether the profits, as well as the advantages and conveniences, of the latter were not more than counterbalanced by the awful sacrifice of human life which we hear of almost every day in this continent.—Thus it is, sir, that farmers generally, in discussing these questions, though valuable, instructive, and each of them highly important in its own place, sometimes overlook those of minor importance, but which, nevertheless, are entitled to their serious consideration.

Now the question arises, What will make the best, the prettiest, the most formidable live-fence? I answer, English Hawthorn, the *Crataegus Oxyacantha* of the naturalist, the haws of which, gathered in October or November, and mixed with sand or dry earth, and frequently tinned to separate the seeds from the pulp, are sown in beds in the spring of second year after gathering,—and covered with fine soil about an inch in depth, when strong enough the seedlings are planted into nursery rows—and then about three after they will be ready to be transplanted into the hedgerows. In the part of Britain where I came from, such plants could be bought at the nurseries for 10s. or 15s. per thousand; in this country, I presume they would cost more than double that amount. The young quicks should be transplanted in the fall, not later than October.

Hedges are generally planted on banks having a ditch on one side, and sometimes on both, but (except in the case of forming a fence against a road, or on flat wet land, where ditches are required as drains) it is a great waste of ground to have a ditch at all; and, therefore, it is preferable that the hedge should be planted on the plain surface of the earth. The ground, however, should undergo a thorough preparation by being trenched with the spade, or deeply ploughed, and if a small quantity of barn-yard manure be applied, so much the better. The planting is performed by first training the young plants, then by stretching a line along the middle of the prepared ground, and a man with a common garden dibble precedes, making the necessary holes in the soil 5 inches apart, alternately 2 inches on either side of the line, another follows putting the plants into the dibbled and carefully and lightly treading them on every side with the foot, leaving a slight hollow around the plant, to catch the rain, and retain the moisture about the roots. The single ditch may be used when fencing against a road or a distinct property, the ditch should be made on the same side as the road, and the soil having been thrown up from the ditch to form a mound upon which the plants are laid, (following the same rule as in dibbling, of having two lines of plants) about six and ten inches from the side of the bank, the roots being towards the field side, and from where the good soil is thrown upon the roots. But it has been objected, and perhaps justly too, that the young plants are frequently destroyed by mice in winter, this may be partially true, but the chances are in favour of planting—it is indeed a disastrous battle in which all are killed, when not a man is left to tell the melancholy tale. The few plants thus destroyed by vermin can be easily replaced, and in eight or ten years the persevering farmer will have the pleasure of seeing a beautiful hedge row, affording both shade and shelter to his cattle, instead of the unsightly zig-zag rail fence, the very sight of which was enough to entice a marauding ox to make an inroad on his neighbour's grain.

Let this question be thoroughly agitated and acted on, and a few years will show the happy results. In the meantime some of your intelligent readers, may favour you with their experience, on this important subject. HIBERNICUS.