

produces the China grass. Experiments made with care, by order of the Government of the Netherlands, prove the superiority of its fibre, even over that of flax and hemp. Decaisne, who has written a special treatise on this plant, thinks, with reason, that it would be expedient to try its cultivation in other countries. The Canadian farmer's attention might be profitably given to these species, as well as to the native variety, as there are many places in our extensive country whose climate and soil will be found to be well adapted to their cultivation.

The Canadian nettle belongs to a family of which many of the species, as has been shown, are conspicuous for their fibrous properties. It appears to be useless, only because we do not enjoy the pleasure or take the trouble of reading the wide-spread book of Nature.

Soils that are suitable for the cultivation of flax and hemp will be equally so for the production of the nettle. An herbaceous perennial, the chief labor in its cultivation will be for the first year. Subsequent labor will mainly consist in keeping the plants free from weeds, and giving them an occasional top-dressing of manure. The land should, of course, in the first instance, be well ploughed and properly drained; also well harrowed and rolled, to have the top-soil in good tilth.

The seed may be sown broadcast, or in drills about a foot apart. The stems rise slender and fine, according to their proximity. When sown thickly together they shoot up into long, wand-like plants; air and light having less free admission, and heat having less influence in evaporating the sap, the effect is to produce a longer fibre, which is at the same time soft and pliable, as well as more easily separated, and is in larger quantity on the same space than when set widely apart.

They should be cut before the seed is fully ripe, but that which is required for sowing ought to be taken from plants allowed enough room to spread, and to fully ripen their seed.

After being cut, the nettles ought, according to some authorities, to be dried in the sun for one or two days, but it is a matter of doubt whether the plants should be dried before they are steeped. Some think this drying needless trouble; others that the plants should be put in the water as soon as they are cut. When put in green they require less steeping than when put in dry. The time will, however, depend a good deal on the temperature of the water.

The steeping of the nettle, called *water-retting*, is a very important part of its preparation, and is to be distinguished from another method, which is called *dew-retting*. The steeping places are often only ditches, three or four feet deep, varying in breadth and length, dug for the purpose on the margins of rivers. The