

The Culture, Harvesting and Manufacture of Flax.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR,—In your last issue I observe you notice the favourable progress of the growing crops—wheat, barley, oats, hay and turnips are favourably spoken of; not a word about flax, the crop of all others so necessary to keep under the notice of our agriculturists, many of whom have not given it a trial. I am happy to be able to state that the growing crop looks remarkably well; and, while wheat, barley &c., &c., are subject to the ravages of the midge, weevil, and several other drawbacks, flax is exempt from all those damaging influences which, I am sorry to say, our farmers have suffered from of late years so much. It is also well known, and admitted by all parties who have sown flax, that it completely destroys the wire-worm. Now that the season is fast approaching for harvesting flax, which generally comes in a week or ten days before most other crops, except hay or rye, I would beg leave to remind those who have sown it this year that much will depend on the care and attention they bestow in caring for the crop when ready for pulling, and in handling afterwards. It is much better to pull on the green side, and allow the seed to ripen in the stook, as much of the valuable oily substance is left in the fibre by this means, and adds much to its strength and quality. The quantity of seed will not be lessened, nor the quality injured at all for converting into linseed oil and oil cake. Great care should be taken in pulling or cutting to keep the best ends quite even, and the handfuls should be laid diagonally in the beet, which will render them much more easily handled afterwards, if either dew or water-rotted.

It would be well if farmers who have sown flax this year would give it that attention it requires, and so well deserves, as it so often happens, when parties have only put in a patch, or even a few acres, they are apt to neglect it, while attending to their other crops. It is the most of all likely to sustain injury, and hence a loss is incurred, and it is alleged that flax will not pay. There is no crop from which so much can be gained, by proper attention, as flax. The quality of the fibre is often increased in value double by proper attention, and a little judgment in the after treatment, while *steeping*, *dew-rolling*, or *grassing*. A great deal depends on proper care in this stage of management. A proper time must be observed for spreading on the grass if dew-rotted, and still more care is required to see it is lifted at the proper time. If left too long, which is so often the case, the fibre loses its strength, and often produces only tow in place of a fine quality of fibre. On the other hand, if taken off the grass too soon, it will not scutch clean, nor produce a good quality of fibre. If watered, the same care is most essential, as in Finland, Belgium, and all other countries. Parties desiring to produce the finer qualities are known, in many instances, to watch the time to a few hours before taking it out of the water. Full particulars on this head have already been given in several letters which have appeared in this Journal, and also in a pamphlet lately published, and sold at all book stores, entitled, "Practical Hints on Flax Culture."

The manufacture of this valuable fibre, after the farmer has done his part in producing it, ought to receive more favourable attention by our enterprising business men, as the cry is often heard, we are depending entirely on agriculture for our success. There is no good reason why we should not extend our manufacturing operations, more especially in this direction, since, when it has been proved beyond a doubt that the climate and soil of this country are so admirably adapted to produce any quantity of the "raw material."

Our reformatories might be turned to better account, and the inmates employed in spinning and weaving. Hand looms could be readily introduced, and the ingenuity of many of those unfortunate persons made to aid materially in rendering such institutions self-sustaining. The coarser descriptions of goods could be produced at prices quite as low as

we are obliged to pay for imported goods of this class, when we take into consideration that we are the producers of the raw material, and have 60 per cent. on the sterling in our favour.

By extending the manufacturing interest, more encouragement would be offered to the farmers to grow; and our people would find employment—a matter about which there is so much said at present, as affecting the general prosperity of the country. The favourable appearance of the flax crop this season, and the fact that parties of enterprise and capital are giving this subject more attention, is a guarantee that more will be done in this new and valuable branch of Canadian industry.

JOHN A. DONALDSON.

Toronto, June 17, 1865.

Flax in and about Meadowvale.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR:—I have thought it might not be amiss to give you some account of the culture and prospects of the flax plant, in this part of the country. In Norval, a village situated on the Credit, about 8 miles to the West of us, Mr. Mitchell of that place has had a flax mill in successful operation for some time, and has this year given out seed enough to sow about 500 acres. I understand that he intends making thread in connection with his scutching mill.

The firm of Gooderham & Worts, with their usual enterprise, are also about engaging in the business, and will have a flax mill at work this fall in Streetsville. It will employ some 20 hands. It is the intention of the firm to engage ere long in the Linen Manufacture, and so extensively as to require the produce of many scutching mills along with their own. They have given out at their stores in Meadowvale and Streetsville, enough seed to sow at least, 700 acres; and of course there will be a large amount grown in addition by farmers who have the seed within themselves. But taking the 1200 acres sown with seed obtained from the parties mentioned, at an average yield of 2½ tons per acre, we here have 3000 tons, and reckoning this again at an average price of \$12 per ton, we have the snug sum of \$36,000 brought into the neighbourhood of these mills by the culture of flax. The return per acre would be about \$30, and deducting \$4 for seed, &c., \$4 for harvesting we have a net return of \$22 per acre, a very nice margin of profit over the crops of law, as the farmer can witness. And this return the farmer can depend on more than in the case of most other crops, as the flax is unhurt by frost or rust, or mildew, untouched of wire-worms, midge, or weevil. It has its enemies, of course, like all other crops, and suffers from drouth, bad farming, and as a result of the latter in poor soil, and Canada thistles. There is a field not far from here full of wire-worm, about 2 acres of which in the centre of the field is sown with flax, and the rest all around it with barley; while the flax is unhurt and thrifty, the barley was destroyed by the worm.

The opinion prevailed among us that flax was a tender plant, and not at all suited to the "rough and tumble" of Canada life, but that notion has gone, now that the plant can show for itself. One of our best and most intelligent farmers was remarking to me that he had no idea it was as hardy and thrifty as it appears to be. The great objection the farmers have to growing it is the pulling of it, as labor is scarce on most farms, and the pulling of it is doubly as tedious as reaping the wheat with the sickle used to be. If a machine can be found that will pull or cut it, doing the work quickly, cheaply, and well, it would be a desideratum, and greatly conduce to the culture of that crop throughout the Province. Another objection urged is that it is exhaustive to the soil, always taking, never giving. The remedy for this may be found in the fact that with the \$22 per acre we can, in comparison with other crops, afford to purchase artificial and other manures; and judging from what I have seen, sod is the best for flax, so that you may clover as much as you will (sow it on your sod and check the wire-worm), and I have heard it said, from a person acquainted with its present culture in Ireland, that there they "seed down" with the crop, and I believe it answers well in this country to do so. And surely, considering what a blessing the turnip crop has been to Britain, and how

much manure it returns in proportion to the acres sown, the increased growth of that vegetable would more than make up on our farms the want created by the culture of the flax plant.

I shall conclude by a description of a field of flax of 32 acres adjoining this village. It is the property of Gooderham & Worts, and is situated on the flats of the Credit. About 20 acres of the field was sod, a large portion of which had been returned for 17 years, the rest of the sod gave two fine crops of clover last year, the other part was in Mangolds and Turnips. The soil is a rich clay loam, and the wettest parts are underdrained. The field was ploughed this spring 6 inches deep; three or four times harrowed, twice rolled with a heavy roller, and sown about the last week of April, then only harrowed. Mr. W. Gooderham is of opinion that it would have been better to have rolled it after the sowing.

Contrary to expectation, the flax on the sod is more than twice the height of that on the turnip land. Last evening I measured stems of it 22 inches in length. The likely yield of the field will probably be about 100 tons—\$1200. The greater part of the turnip land has been sown with Coe's Super-phosphate, at the rate of a barrel per acre, but we are not able as yet to pronounce definitely as to its benefit on the crop. The flax will shortly be in bloom, a sight worth the eyes of him who has made the "lint" a classic plant.

WILLIAM LESLIE.

Meadowvale, June 17, 1865.

NOTE by Ed. C. F.—Has not our correspondent rather overstated the profits of the flax crop? The expense account seems to us a somewhat light one. Even with less margin of profit than that given in the foregoing letter, it will pay well to raise this crop.

A Choice Sample of Fall Wheat.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR,—As a specimen of what can be produced on the north side of Lake Simcoe, in a part of the country where there is still much wild land to be occupied, we send you a beautiful sample of fall wheat, grown by Mr. Joseph Kean, of the township of Orillia. The yield was twenty-eight bushels to the acre, and Mr. Kean received the following letter from the Hon. W. B. Robinson in reference to it.

We have the honour to remain,

Faithfully yours,

O'BRIEN & Co.

Orillia, June 10, 1865.

"CANADA COMPANY'S OFFICE,

"Toronto, 3rd February, 1865.

"JOSEPH KEAN, Esq., Orillia, O. W.

"DEAR SIR,—I have to thank you for the splendid sample of fall wheat you sent us some time since. It has been greatly admired, and were it not for a little smut would be, I think, superior to that exhibited at the late Provincial Show, and which took the Canada Company's prize.

"I must congratulate you upon having land that will grow such fine grain.

"W. B. ROBINSON,
"Commissioner."

NOTE by Ed. C. F.—We cordially endorse the opinions expressed above. The sample submitted to us is really very choice and beautiful; and some of our Toronto merchants, to whom we showed it, stated that they had seen no fall wheat that would favourably compare with it, offered for sale in this market for some years.

A LARGE CROP OF TURNIPS.—In the *Genesee Farmer*, for April, 1862, Mr. John T. Andrews of West Cornwall, Ct., gave an account of a crop of ruta bagas raised by him the previous season, the yield of which was, by actual measurement, 416½ bushels on a quarter of an acre, or 1666 bushels per acre. They were sown June 20th, on ridges 27 inches apart, and thinned out in the rows ten inches to a foot apart. The land had been very heavily manured, and in addition to this, after the ridges were made, a compost of hen droppings, night-soil, ashes, plaster, &c., was scattered in the ridges, which were then split with the plough, turning the soil back again and covering up the manure.

We mention the fact at this time, as we see a statement going the rounds of the papers, that Mr. Andrews has raised a crop of 2103 bushels per acre. We had supposed his former crop was one of the largest ever raised, but it would seem that he has beaten himself.—*Genesee Farmer*.