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## The Field.

### A "Piece" about Weeds.

Mr Harris, author of "Walks and Talks" in the *American Agriculturist*, is the best hater of weeds with whom we have any acquaintance. He is always fighting them; with tongue, pen, hoe, plough, and scarifier. All who know him are well aware that weed killing is a hobby of his. But a stranger driving past his farm and holding a brief conversation with him, ignorant of his passion for weed-slaughter, suggested at parting that he should write on the importance of destroying these pests of the farm, for the special edification and benefit of sundry of his near neighbors. The duty is very cheerfully taken up and discharged as follows:

It amused me, however, to be told to "write a piece" for the *Agriculturist* on killing weeds. Nothing would please me better. I have weeds on the brain. I think about weeds, talk about weeds and dream about weeds. If I had to write a piece, I would certainly select weeds. If I had to preach a sermon, the text would probably be: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof." I think the Squire would give up his pew, and the Deacon would suggest the next morning that "there was some dissatisfaction in the church, and that it was thought a change of climate would be good for me." Write a piece about weeds? What was the old gentleman thinking about? Does he want to buy my farm? Does he want this neighborhood to become too hot for me? The Deacon has already threatened to "write a piece" for the *Agriculturist*, pointing out the weak spots in my system of farming. The Deacon has been talking the matter over with some of the neighbors. Last fall I had two or three hundred bushels of mangels frozen in the ground. This is to be one of the charges. They forget that I saved three thousand bushels. Then I had half an acre of turnips frozen in the ground. But I saved four or five acres that would yield eight or nine hundred bushels per acre. The charge in brief is: "He knows how to raise good crops, but does not know how to take care of them." This is letting me off pretty easy. I could make out a better case. On the whole, I think I will follow the old gentleman's advice, and write a "piece" about weeds. The weather is very hot, and "composing" is hard work, but I will try my hand at a short "composition."

"A weed is a plant growing where you do not want it to grow. Thistles are not weeds when grown, as they are in France, to make perfume. The thistles growing in the Deacon's wheat are weeds. He does not want them there. If you have six plants of corn in a hill where you only want four, two of them are

weeds. A dead weed is not a weed. A growing weed pumps up water out of the ground. The weeds in an acre of the Deacon's clover pump up more water in a day than all his animals drink in a month. Weeds propagate faster than rats. I have got more rats than the Deacon, but the Deacon beats me on weeds. The boys shoot the rats. Yesterday they shot two and scared away a dozen. Next year they will come back again. The Deacon kills a hundred of his weeds and buries a thousand. Next spring they will come up by the million. You can't get rid of weeds unless you kill them. If you do not kill them, they will kill you. They are worse than foot-rot in sheep. They spread faster than caterpillars on currant bushes, or than the canker-worms on apple trees. Some of the orchards in this neighborhood look as though they had been sprinkled over with kerosene and set fire to. The worms have eaten off every leaf. Some farmers keep off the insects by putting tar-bands round the trunks of the trees in spring; some don't. They think it is no use fighting the worms. Some farmers think it is no use killing the weeds. It is natural for the soil to produce weeds. They say you can't kill them. The Deacon does not say weeds can't be killed, but he does not try to kill them. He hoes his corn. I don't hoe my corn. I hoe the weeds. I would kill the weeds if there was no corn. I am not sure that the Deacon would. The Deacon never summer-fallows. He never fall-fallows. He never tries to make the weeds grow. He tries to smother them up for a few months. He does not kill the roots. He does not make the weed-seeds grow and then kill the young plants. The weeds on his farm are getting worse and worse. My farm used to be worse than his; now some of it is cleaner than his. I am fighting the weeds. He lets them grow, and is waiting for something to turn up. There are thousands of farmers doing the same thing. The weeds cost us more than all our State, national and local taxes; more than all our schools, churches and newspapers. They are more expensive than children's boots and ladies' bonnets. They are as bad as cigars and fast horses. The horse may break his neck, and you will get rid of him; but the weeds will stick tighter than a mortgage, and run up faster than compound interest or a grocery bill. They are like bad habits. You must not tamper with them. No half-way measures will answer. The only way to stop using tobacco is to stop. The only way to kill weeds is to kill them."

I hope the old gentleman will be pleased with my "composition." I hope when he visits this neighborhood again he will find fewer weeds. Lard worth \$150 per acre ought to produce something better than thistles, red-root, quack-grass and chess.

### English Prize Farms.

The following account of the farms which competed for the Royal Agricultural Society's prize, is from the *Agricultural Gazette*, and will doubtless be read with much interest.

"Who is the best farmer? Is he the man who makes the most money by farming? That would be a short and easy way of determining agricultural merit. No doubt "all men,"—and that includes farm judges—"will speak well of thee if thou doest well unto thyself," but we hardly think that prosperity in an occupation in which so many risks are incurred is an unfauling test of excellence in agriculture. Shall we, then, choose the man who, having made more money than his neighbor, at the same

time has maintained his land in the best condition? This would hardly avoid the difficulty already intimated, but it takes in another class, who ought to be consulted before a decision is arrived at; and the owner as well as the tenant of the land being thus satisfied with its management, that cannot fail of being excellent. There are, however, others, as well as the tenant and the owner of the land, who ought to be content with an award of this kind. Certainly the quantity of food produced upon a given area, as well as the economy and simplicity—in short, the excellence—of the means by which it has been produced ought to be considered; and the man who has economically produced more food per annum than another over a series of years, on an equal area of land of similar natural character, cannot fail, we think, of being the better farmer of the two. Whether he has achieved good fortune or not, he has certainly deserved it.

"We doubt, however, if the judges appointed by the English Agricultural Society to inspect the farms competing for their 100 guineas cup would (this year, at any rate) have found any great assistance by laying down beforehand rules of criticism for the guidance of their decision, and we are sure that they have met with quite as much difficulty in determining the best of four as their predecessors had experienced in determining the best of four-and-twenty. It is generally easy enough to select the best three or four out of a large number of farms, and this year the four who have competed are, in fact, the few of nearly equal merit which, probably, would have been those selected for final comparison out of a much larger number. We speak from personal inspection of only three of them, however—the fourth, occupied by Mr. Charles Lambert, of "Sunk Island," highly commended, like the others, we have not seen. It is, we understand, in a stiffer country than that in which the other three are situated, where the practice long ago of growing repeated crops of corn—getting rid of their straw by the easy method of setting fire to it!—has resulted in not only impoverishment of the naturally fertile alluvium, but in an alteration of the very texture of the soil; which, lacking the annual admixture of dung, even if it were mere straw and water, has become not only poorer, but stiffer and more unkind. The value of farm manure, enriched by the liberal use of cake and meal in sheep and cattle feeding, has, of course, been long understood and realized in the Holderness district; but this fine fertile level, some 200 square miles in extent, is even yet more remarkable for its large corn produce than for any other feature of its agriculture.

"We cannot pretend, after a few hours upon the farms occupied by the Messrs. Peter Dunn of Pasture House; W. G. Walgate of West Hill; and G. England of Carlton—all near neighbors in the Holderness district—to any such knowledge of them as would enable us to review a decision carefully arrived at by the considerate and practical men who are this year responsible for the official award. It was certainly a very difficult thing to determine the relative professional excellence of these three gentlemen. They have been occupants of their respective farms for periods differing so much as 40 years and only four; and possibly in cases of equal excellence, a consideration of that kind ought to be allowed some weight; but we do not know that any such consideration was needed for their decision, which, indeed we do not pretend to criticize. Our readers will be better pleased to learn such of the facts on which the decision was necessarily based, as we could gather in a hasty morning visit.

Mr. Peter Dunn occupies about 300 acres, of which