

## FARMERS' CLUBS.

## EXTRACT FROM THE SPEECH OF MR. MECHI.

With regard to draining, your land here is particularly situated. Much of it does not appear to require drainage; but I think I saw a considerable portion in which the water, though not apparent on the surface, was rather too near to the surface to be comfortable to the crops. We are sometimes apt to be deceived, and we ought always to ascertain how near the water is to the surface, by digging holes. If you dig a post-hole in land—I do not know whether it is so in this neighbourhood, but if you do so in many lands, where water is not apparent on the surface,—you will find it soon flow, especially 3, 4, or 5 feet deep. Therefore, by digging such holes, if the level of the water is found within 3 or four feet of the surface, I should decidedly recommend such land to be drained to the depth of 5 feet because it is for want of depth of soil that the wheat turns off yellow, especially after a wet season. I have observed a crop of wheat go on flourishing up to the beginning of May, and then it assumed a yellow and pallid appearance, and what is commonly called, goes off; and that results, in fact, from the roots having a desire to go deeper into the soil, and meeting with stagnant water. It is much the same as stopping the drainage in a flower-pot, and giving it water, or keeping the pan of the flower-pot full of water. You will invariably find that the result of that is to turn the plant yellow, as I have no doubt you have observed. As to the mode of drainage, I am quite convinced that it ought to be up and down the hill, and not across it. A very amusing instance of that occurred on my farm the other day. A piece of land on the slope had been drained across the hill at only two feet deep. I had occasion to put in some posts of rails on the incline below the drains, and I found that the holes were full of water, exactly level with the drain, which, although two feet deep, being two feet higher in the rise, of course did not take the water from this post-hole. Now, if that drain, instead of being cut across the hill, had been cut down the hill, it would have met the water, and have been an equal distance from each portion of earth down the hill; or if cut four feet instead of two, the water would have found its way down to the drain; but by cutting shallow drains on a hill, and carrying them across a hill, it is clear that the water below the drain has

no power to go into it, but has a long way to go to find the way into the next drain, whereas, if the drains were cut up and down the hill, every portion of soil, as it declined, would gradually find its way to the drain from both sides. I am afraid I am getting rather tedious. (No, no, and applause.) Well, there is another point. I have been feeding sheep on Mr. Huxtable's plan—what is called board wages. (Laughter.) I find that it is a very successful practice; and I do not see that you have it in operation in this immediate neighbourhood. I have had eighty sheep on boards for several months, and they thrive admirably well; and when I tell you, that, at one year old, several of them weigh 12 stones, which is 24lbs. a quarter for half-bred sheep, you will naturally agree with me that it is a profitable way of feeding them. I sold some of them the other day at £3 a piece. I find in practice, that no disease attacks sheep so situated. Occasionally one or two, from being apoplectic and fat, were immediately consigned to the butcher. There is no foot-rot, and they generally present a most healthy and comfortable appearance. On our cold and exposed land, they certainly thrive infinitely better than some I have tried on the old system of folding. They consume less food, in proportion to the fat they put on. There is no expense for straw, and their manure falls through on some dust and burnt earth. By using about half a pound of gypsum per day, and sweeping it down between the cracks, we have an excellent crop of manure to grow the turnips for next year. It is neither too wet nor too dry, but just in that state in which, in a hot summer's day, the turnip roots will find a very comfortable meal. I think we are bound to look at all these operations, not as advocates—no man should *advocate* a principle in agriculture. We should state the facts, and the result, as a matter of profit. (Applause.) And then those who had the opportunity of seeing the fact can draw their own conclusions. I know practically, that, where there is capital, there is generally an ample desire on the part of the farmers to do everything that is profitable. I do not agree in the vulgar prejudice that agriculturists are slow to observe things conducive to their own interests. There are some few old prejudices, but I do not accuse agriculturists of being slow in adopting what is profitable. The question of thin sowing is now rather a ticklish one; and judging from what I have seen in your neighbourhood, it has not made much progress here.