



AGRICULTURAL MEETING AT DRAYTON MANOR.

Mr. WOODWARD said that although unaccustomed to public speaking, and feeling diffidence in addressing an audience consisting of some of the most intelligent and scientific men that England can boast of, he would endeavour to give the meeting the result of his practical experience of 20 years as an agriculturist. In his opinion, thorough draining was the foundation of all good husbandry, *without which manures and skill are thrown away*. Some undrained land had come into his occupation, heavy land, which only produced 10½ bushels of Wheat per acre; he immediately drained it 3 feet deep, subsoiled it, dressed it with burnt clay, and the first year obtained from it 51 bushels. He regarded the extensive burning of clay land as a most important practice. It rendered the soil so much more friable and convertible, and enabled the farmer to work it with much less horse labour. The effects of burnt clay upon all green crops was wonderful, a most important fact which could not be too strongly impressed upon the mind, as being very essential to the growth of corn especially when consumed upon the land by sheep, eating at the same time a little oil-cake or refuse corn. He had not, however, found advantage in the use of Italian Rye-grass, which he thought underserving the praise it had received. The treading of sheep was highly advantageous to the Wheat crop, provided the land was thoroughly drained and subsoiled. In order to secure the requisite amount of pressure, he had not only employed sheep but horses, or even men, who he found could tread down land for 1s. 6d. an acre. He had also found advantage, under some circumstances, in the use of an instrument which he called a peg roller. This was formed of an elm-wood cylinder, studded with oak pegs about 4 inches apart; it proved to be a most effectual implement when drawn over the land, imitating as it did the consolidating power exercised by the feet of a flock of sheep. He regarded pressing down the land as opposing an invincible obstacle to the operations of grubs and wireworms. As to dead fallows, he entirely objected to them as wasteful and useless. On his clay land, when in turn for fallow, he planted Vetches, and on his gravel, Rye and Rye and Vetches. For cleaning his stubbles after harvest, he employed the implement called a two-edged "Skim," which he strongly recommended as a

cheap and most valuable modern invention. Mr. Woodward then pointed out what he regarded as the best manner of breaking up superior pastures and converting them into arable; and concluded a very instructive speech by forcibly pointing out the absolute necessity of sending back to the land whatever is removed by a crop, and by expressing his entire agreement in opinion with Mr. Woolwich Whitmore, Mr. Huxtable, and others, that *farming properly and efficiently carried out, with capital and skill*, may be made as profitable an investment as railways or other branches of commerce. Being asked whether he held his land on lease, Mr. Woodward replied that he did. But even if he had not, he, nevertheless, was of opinion that the expense he incurred in the improvement of his land would have answered his purpose, for his improved wheat crop repaid those expenses immediately. As to leases, he attached little importance to them, provided there existed something like tenant right, which would by law ensure to the outgoing tenant the whole unexhausted value of the improvements he had made; whether this was to be paid by landlord or in-coming tenant, was, he thought, of no importance. He trusted that the legislature would see the necessity of passing some enactment that would secure this right; otherwise it was not to be expected that tenants would expend their capital on land. Mr. Woodward having expressed a desire that Mr. Mechi would bring under the notice of the meeting the result of his high farming in Essex,

Mr. MECHEI responded to the call. His practice in agriculture coincided so nearly with Mr. Woodward's, that it was only necessary to say that he grew alternately grain and root or leguminous crops, endeavouring as much as possible to grow wheat alternate years. He had originally drained his land 2 feet 8 inches deep, with pipes and stones, at a considerable expense; but since he had had the good fortune to meet with Mr. Parkes, he had amended his errors, and was draining more deeply and effectually with pipes alone at one-third the cost. He rented some land adjoining his own; although he held but a seven years' lease, he drained it five feet deep with one inch pipes, at a cost of from 35s. to 50s. per acre. *He could not afford to deprive himself of the benefit of drainage*. He found it very unprofitable to farm such land undrained. The very first wheat crop remunerated him for the whole cost.—The result of his improvements at Tip-

tree had been to double the produce of his farm and of his labour. A portion of it was formerly a swamp, not producing 5s. per acre. He had been entreated this year by a gardener in the neighbourhood to let those 4 acres to him, at an annual rental of £5 per acre. He had removed 3½ miles of unnecessary banks and fences. Taking the arable acreage of the United Kingdom, he thought they might safely dispense with 500,000 miles of unnecessary fencing, which with its timber displaced much food and labour. He considered the agriculture of this country in a very backward and unsatisfactory state compared with its manufactures. The agricultural mechanical appliances were rude, costly, and unprofitable. The farm buildings generally were bad and uncentrally placed, causing a national loss of some millions; each ton of produce or manure costing an average carriage of 6d. per mile, renders the position of the building an important national consideration. Waggonage was a most unphilosophical contrivance. It was quite clear that a long, light, low cart on two wheels, having an area of capacity equal to a waggon, and only costing half as much, was a much more sensible and profitable mode of conveyance. The question was not now an open one, having been thoroughly discussed and decided upon at the London Farmers' Club; therefore the sooner the waggons were got rid of the better.—With regard to the quantity of seed, his experiments (conducted now for three years and publicly recorded), had uniformly been in favour of thin sowing, say from 4 to 5 pecks of wheat and 6 to 7 pecks of barley and oats. Some of the best farmers in his neighbourhood adopted this system successfully. It was highly important in a national point of view that this question should be settled; for if the quantities he had named were available, adieu at once to the necessity for foreign imports. It appeared to be admitted on all hands that if a bushel of wheat vegetated, it was an ample seedling; and it was reasonable that it should be so; because if each good kernel produced only one ear containing 48 kernels (and that was not a large one), there was no allowance for increase by branching or tillering, which we knew would take place to a considerable extent in well farmed land, containing an abundance of organic matter. Thin sowing delayed the ripening three or four days; consolidation by pressure prevented the development and action of wireworm and slug.