

When the flock reaches the mountains, each shepherd has his proper boundary marked out, and the proprietors of the land are paid about twenty pence per sheep for their feed during the Summer. The shepherds sleep with their flocks in the open air, and live almost entirely on bread and goats' milk.

In the south-west of France, on those wild plains called *Les Landes*, the shepherds lead a very singular life. The country consists of large tracts of deep sand, or of marshy ground, with scanty herbage and prickly shrubs. That they may cross these sands without difficulty, the shepherds fasten stilts, or wooden poles five feet long, to their legs, putting them on and off as regularly as any part of their dress. When their flock are grazing, they do not take off these stilts, but remain elevated upon them that they may the better watch their sheep. The top of the long staff which they use in walking is made broad and round, so that they can sit upon it. Thus seated they knit stockings all day, and, clad in her rough sheep-skin coats and caps, they have a most singular appearance, looking like so many little watch-towers scattered over the country. The rate at which they can travel on these tall stilts is said to be equal to that of a trotting-horse.

Some of the sheep-owners in Australia possess fifteen or twenty thousand sheep, and these are led out to graze before sunrise, and folded or brought back to the sheep-yard at night. The wild dogs of that country are great enemies to the sheep, and will sometimes fall upon them in the open day. The shepherd is, therefore, always on the watch; and in setting up his fold, he uses hurdles made of slender rods of iron or oak seven feet long, and so close together that the lambs cannot escape, nor dogs enter. By the side of this fold he places a moveable, weather-tight hut, in which with his dogs he passes the night, keeping a fire burning near the hut to scare away the wild dogs. He has also to watch against a more crafty foe in the escaped convict, whose retreat into the interior of the country is said to be usually well stored with mutton stolen from the different folds.

horticultural.

On the obtaining of a New and Superior Parsnip from the Wild Species.

As the origin of some of our common cultivated plants has been considered by some to be a matter of extreme mystery.—a few (a very few) among botanists, holding the notion that such really have descended to us from the Garden of Eden,—we shall here give an account of some successful experiments in the ennobling of the wild parsnip, in order, if possible, to point out the principles connected with the development of these useful roots.

Professor Buckman, of the Royal Agricultural College, Princeton, in the autumn of 1847, gathered some seeds of the *Pastinaca Sativa*, (the wild parsnip) which was sown in the following spring. On coming up, the plants were *thinned*, and when sufficiently advanced it was found that most of the plants had the hairy, dark coloured leaves, with narrow segments, of the ordinary wild plants. Amongst these, however, were a few plants with the leaflets larger, a brighter colour, and smooth, like those of the cultivated examples. These latter, then, were left for the crop; and in the autumn of the same year the roots were taken up, and the best of them *sto ed in sand*, to be transplanted for the growth of seed.

Many of the second generation from the wild stock showed, on coming to maturity, more or less of improvement, on the small, wiry root of the wild species. Some of them had a generally clear, well-shaped outline, with a few lateral roots, whilst the foliage had assumed the form and colour of the garden parsnip. The objectionable lateral roots were in reality examples of finger and toe, which in a cultivated parsnip is sure to be derived from a degenerate stock; but, just as in the crop parsnip, this tendency may be considered as the sign of degeneracy, so in the present case it was viewed as an evidence of advance to a better form from the *wild state*. The selection of the best of these for seed, and again selecting in like manner from the produce, in ten years resulted in the production of a new variety of parsnips, possessing the following advantages:

1. A more perfect outline, as being free from finger and toe.

2. A better flavour than the ordinary parsnip.

3. As being of a newer sort, and as yet not degenerated in constitution from repeated cultivation in the same soil, it may be expected to be free from tendencies to malformation or disease.

Professor Buckman found that this parsnip in form was all that could be desired, its root remarkably clear and straight, free from lateral branchlets, and its flavour such as to render it the best of all cultivated varieties. He gave it the name of the "*Student*;" and finding it impossible to continue growing it in the same soil without degeneracy, he assigned the seed to the well-known nurseryman, Messrs. Sutter, of Reading, who have grown it with great care, and the following is their report of their crop of 1861:

"We are happy to tell you that, in lifting some of each of the varieties of parsnips in our trial ground, your "*Student*" was decidedly the best shape, varying in length, but always clean and straight."

Such testimony then is good evidence of the value of this new form of parsnip, whilst the case, as we have detailed it, cannot fail to be interesting to those who would study the origin of our esculent vegetables. If the points before mentioned, gathering seed and sowing it in pre-