

Without method, there cannot be success,—different soils require difference of rotation. In the best soils of Flanders, flax is grown in the third year of a seven-course rotation, or the fifth of a ten-course rotation. It is not considered generally advisable to grow flax more frequently than once in ten years.* In Belgium, it invariably follows a grain crop,—generally oats; and, in this country, where oats is such a principal crop, the same system might be profitably pursued; but it must be understood, that it is only after oats following a green crop or old lea, and never after two or three succeeding crops of oats, which bad practice still prevails in some districts. It is a very general error, among farmers, to consider it necessary, that flax should follow a potato crop. Except on very poor soils, a better crop will be produced after grain, and the double benefit of the grain and flax secured. If old lea be broken up, and potatoes planted, a very fine crop of flax may be obtained in the following year.

PREPARATION OF THE SOIL.

One of the points of the greatest importance in the culture of flax is, by thorough-draining, and by careful and repeated cleansing of the land from weeds, to render it of the finest, deepest, and cleanest nature. This will make room for the roots to penetrate, which they will often do, to a depth equal to one-half the length of the stem above ground.

After wheat, one ploughing may be sufficient on light friable loam, but two are better; and on stiff soils, three are advisable,—one in Autumn, and two in Spring, so as to be ready for sowing in the first or second week of April. Much will, of course, depend on the nature of the soil, and the knowledge and experience of the farmer. The land should be so drained and subsoiled, that it can be sown in flats, which give more evenly, and much better crops. But, until the system of thorough-draining be general, it will be necessary, after oats, to plough early in Autumn. Throw the land into ridges, that it may receive the frost and air; and make surface drains, to carry off

* The following rotation, which would bring flax once in ten years, has been proposed:—First year, potatoes; second, barley, laid down with grasses; third year, cut for soiling; fourth year, pasture; fifth year, flax; or the one one-half might be better in flax, the other in oats, so that, with the return of the rotation, which would be in five years, the flax could be put on the ground which, in the last rotatory course, was under oats, throwing a range of ten years between the flax crops coming into the same ground.

A gentleman, of much practical knowledge, recommends the following as being the most profitable:—1. Oats after grass and clover. 2. Flax pulled in August; then ploughed and harrowed in two cwt. guano and two cwt. gypsum; then sown with rape. 3. Potatoes or turnips, well manured. 4. Wheat, and sown in Spring, with clover and rye-grass. 5. Hay and clover. 6. Grazing. 7. Oats. 8. Flax and Winter vetches; guano, as before-mentioned. 9. Turnips, well manured. 10. Barley, sown with rye-grass and clover. 11. Clover and hay. 12. Grazing. 13. Oats.

the rains of Winter. Plough and harrow very early in Spring; and again, a month after, to bring the land into good tilth, and clean it thoroughly from weeds and roots. Following the last harrowing, it is necessary to roll, to give an even surface and consolidate the land, breaking this up again with a short-toothed, or seed harrow, ere sowing.

SOWING.

The seed best adapted for the generality of soils is Riga, although Dutch has been used, in many districts of country, for a series of years, with perfect success. American seed does not generally suit well, as it is apt to produce a coarse, branchy, stem. If used, it should only be on deep, loamy soils. Select plump, shining, heavy seed, of the best brands, from a respectable merchant. Sift it clear of all the seeds of weeds, which will save a great deal of after trouble, when the crop is growing. This may be done by fanners, and through a wire sieve, twelve bars to the inch. Home-saved seed, grown from foreign, has been used, in many cases, with success. It is suggested, that a small portion of the crop may be allowed to stand, until the seed be fully ripe, and then pulled, and the seed preserved for sowing; but the seed saved from it, in the following year, should only be used for feeding, or sold for the oil-mills. The proportion of seed may be stated at three-and-a-half Imperial bushels to the Irish or Plantation acre; and so on, in proportion, to the Scotch or Cunningham, and the English or Statute measure. It is better to sow too thick than too thin; as, with thick sowing, the stem grows tall and straight, with only one or two seed capsules at the top, and the fibre is found greatly superior in fineness and length, to that produced from thin sown flax, which grows coarse, and branches out, producing much seed, but a very inferior quality of fibre. The ground being pulverized and well cleaned, roll and sow. After sowing, cover it with a seed harrow, going twice over it,—once up and down, and once across or anglewise; as this makes it more equally spread, and avoids the small drills made by the teeth of the harrow. Finish with the roller, which will leave the seed covered about an inch, the proper depth. The ridges should be very little raised in the centre; when the ground is ready for the seed, otherwise the crop will not ripen evenly; and when land is properly drained, there should be no ridges. The sowing of clover and grass-seeds along with the flax is not advised, when it can be conveniently avoided, as these plants always injure the root ends of the flax. But carrots may be sown in suitable soils, in drills, so that the person pulling the flax may step over the rows, which may be afterwards hoed and cleaned, and

should have some liquid manure. A stolen crop of rape or Winter vetches may be taken after the flax. Rolling the ground, after sowing, is very advisable, care being taken not to roll, when the ground is so wet, that the earth adheres to the roller.

WEEDING.

If care has been paid to cleaning the seed and the soil, few weeds will appear; but if there be any, they must be carefully pulled. It is done, in Belgium, by women and children, who, with coarse cloths round their knees, creep along on all-fours; this injures the young plant less than walking over it (which, if done, should be by persons whose shoes are not filled with nails); they should work, also, facing the wind, so that the plants, laid flat by the pressure, may be blown up again, or thus be assisted to regain their upright position. The tender plant, pressed one way, soon recovers; but if twisted or flattened by careless weeders it seldom rises again.

PULLING.

The time when flax should be pulled is a point of much nicety to determine. The fibre is in the best state, before seed is quite ripe. If pulled too soon, although the fibre is fine, the great waste in scutching and hackling renders it unprofitable; and, if pulled too late, the additional yield does not compensate for the coarseness of the fibre. It may be stated, that the best time for pulling is, when the seeds are beginning to change from a green to a pale brown colour, and the stalk to become yellow, for about two-thirds of its height from the ground. When any of the crop is lying, and suffering from wet, it should be pulled as soon as possible, and kept by itself. So long as the ground is undrained, and imperfectly levelled before sowing, the flax will be found of different lengths. In such case, pull each length separately, and steep in separate pools, or keep it separate, in the same pool. If the ground has been thorough-drained, and laid out evenly, the flax will be all of the same length. It is more essential to take time and care to keep the flax *even, like a brush*, at the root ends. This increases the value to the spinner, and, of course, to the grower, who will be amply repaid, by an additional price for his extra trouble. Let the handfuls of pulled flax be laid across each other, diagonally, to be ready for the

RIPPLING.

Which should be carried on at the same time, and in the same field, with the pulling. If the only advantage to be derived from rippling was the comparative ease with which rippled flax is handled, the practice ought always be adopted. But, besides this, the seed is a most valuable part of the crop, being worth, if sold for the oil-mill, £3 per acre; and, if used for