Digest of Essays on the Cultivation of the Turnip.

WRITTEN FOR THE FARMERS' ADVOCATE.

In the February number of the FARMERS' ADVOCATE we gave two of the essays on turnip cultivation, written by practical farmers for this paper. That the subject may be brought more systematically before our readers, we have prepared a digest of the whole, arranged under the several heads. They will thus be enabled to see at a glance what is the method pursued by men who are, not mere theorists, but working farmers. At the time of awarding the prizes we had received sixteen essays written on the subject for the ADVOCATE, and we have since had four more sent to us, some of which possessed considerable merit. They were too late for award, but we may refer to them at a future time.

Turnip culture, as treated of in those essays, we have placed under the following heads, viz. :—1. Soil best adapted for growing turnips, and its preparations. 2. Manure and its application. 3. Best kind of turnips to be sown for feeding stock, and the quantity per acre. 4. Distance of drills apart, and of plants in the drills. 5. Subsequent culture. 6. Taking up and storing the crop.

1. The soil best adapted for the growth of turnips is a light soil—one in which sand predominates. One of the essayists (T. Hornor) demonstrates this by a chemical analysis of the turnip crop; but we write not for men of science, but for the practical farmer. A sandy loam has been found to produce the largest crops of turnips with the least labor. A well-prepared, mellow seed bed is requisite, and this is obtained most easily on such a soil. While admitting this to be correct we must bear in mind that we cannot limit the growth of turnips to light soils. Such is not to be met with on every farm ; and even if it were, every part of the farm needs the renovating, fertilizing benefits of turnip culture in its turn. Heavy soils require to be made as dry as possible, thoroughly drained, or at least the water prevented, by water cuts, from lodging in or on it. On this point all agreed—the ground should be dry, if not naturally, made so. All recommend early fall ploughing as the first preparatory step. Turn up the ground early that the seeds of weeds may all grow for their destruction. Plough it deep and strong that it may have the full benefit of the frost. In this the essayists almost all agree. T. Jordan's advice in selecting the foulest, poorest ground for turnips is good when farms are in the ordinary condition, cropped without any system of rotation. He says, "I take for a turnip crop the land that is most foul, and most run down ; by well ploughing, harrowing, &c., my turnips are generally a good crop, and the ground is well prepared for a crop of spring wheat or barley."

2. Good farm yard manure, well-prepared, it is admitted, contains all the requisite elements for the supply of food to the turnip as to other crops. As to the proper time of its application there is a great diversity of opinion—some maintaining that it should be applied in the fall, others when sowing the seed. On this question the writers of the essays are pretty equally divided. Among the advocates of fall manuring is J. Savage, whose method of fall preparation was greatly commended by the judges. McCollum and Alexander are among those who advocate manuring in the spring. The manure, if applied in the spring, must be well rotted before being applied. This was not so indispensible in Ireland and Scotland where McC. and A. learned and first practised agriculture, as these climates were wet, so different from the climate of Canada. T. Hornor recommends, after having manured in the fall, to apply from 100 to 150 bushes of leached ashes, 3 to 6 bushels land salt, and 2 to 3 bushels land plaster. Ashes or plaster sprinkled on the young plaster are recommended.

3. The turnips recommended to be sown are swedes, but of what kind only one writer speaks. He recommends Skerving's Improved. We, in our farming, sowed the purple-topped and Skerving's; the former we found the more productive, the latter of better quality. It is better to sow thick than sparingly—sow about two pounds per acre.

4. Though there is a difference of opinion as to what distance the drills should be apart, and the distance between the plants in the drill, the difference is not great. The essayists generally recommend that the drills be 28 to 30 inches apart, though one considers the proper width to be 24 inches, and another, allowing a great latitude, says the distance apart of the drills may be from 18 to 23 inches. Our own experience is in favor of 30 inches. This keeps the ground sufficiently covered, while at the same time it leaves room for thorough tillage. Ten or twelve inches we always considered the best distance between the plants—any more is waste of ground.

5. The subsequent culture is known to every farmer. As soon as the plants are nearly strong enough to be thinned commence with the cultivator; cultivate as near to the plants as you can without disturbing them ; spare not the labor ; keep the horse-hoe and cultivator going ; let no weeds have an opportunity of taking root ; keep the earth mellow and exposed to the atmosphere. A turnip crop, when properly attended to, confers on the soil much of the advantages of a summer fallow, in addition to the profits of the crop itself for feeding.

6. Some of the writers take up the turnips with the hoe (see McCallum's essay) ; some take them out with the plough ; others with the harrow. In our correspondence of this month will be found a method of taking them up, which is highly recommended. To preserve them for feeding they are to be stored in the root-house, the cellar or pits. The last mentioned we practised in the old country. One season we stored in pits 600 tons of turnips, the produce of 14 acres, and they were entirely free from damage till they were used. In Canada we prefer a good root house to any other way of storing them. In it they are always safe and easy of access. The method of storing we give from the essay of Mr. Hay, of Wyandott. In this the judges approved highly of his essay. "Storing—Run the turnips from the waggon into the cellar (or root-house) over a riddle made of fine slats nailed crosswise, and held up by two legs close to the end of the waggon. It is imperative that the turnips be all lifted from where they drop into the cellar, and thrown back, or else they are sure to heat and rot. This operation can be performed very quick with a six-pronged fork, and then, with even a very imperfect ventilation, they will keep good and fresh until May, or longer if necessary.

These essays we think will be of great service to the writers themselves, as well as to many of our readers. The subject will receive more careful consideration, and the value of science combined with practice made apparent. The value of the turnip crop itself will be more fully inquired into and more generally known. Farmers will soon be convinced that the profits of turnip cultivation are two-fold. It not only gives them a very profitable crop in the turnip, but it also brings into the best condition for future crops the poorest and foulest land.—ASS'T ED.

Talks with Farmers.

Mr. K. I have come to see the November number of the ADVOCATE. When we want any directions of seed or stock, or how to prepare a field or put in a crop, we turn to the ADVOCATE.

Don't you get it regularly by the post office?

Yes, it is always to time, but I cannot get the November number ; the females mislaid it, and when I went to get it, it was not to be had.

Here is the number you want. We always endeavor to keep a few copies of each number on hand, as they always are being sent for. Now our impression for January is almost entirely gone, and for this month (February) we have printed 7,500.

Here is what I wanted ; my calves, I find, are becoming troubled with cattle lice, and I knew I had seen the remedy in the November number.

You saw in the Nov. number the remarks on the fall wheat. Do you agree in the general opinion that it is likely to be seriously injured by the severe frost of the season ?

I hope not. When I read your article on it I examined my own. The frozen snow and ice were very strong, but when I broke through them there was between the ice and the ground an empty space, and the ground itself was not much frozen. The snow under the ice saved the wheat, and the snow is now thawing away while the ice is still remaining. The ground is not much frozen, and the thawed snow is sinking into it instead of running over the frozen surface and off into the river, as is often the case.

I am well pleased with your remarks and hope your expectations may be fulfilled.

It is impossible yet to say how the crop may get on. It may escape any injury for the present, and I hope it has done so, but the month of March is the most trying time for the fall wheat. The freezing and thawing often kill it—heaving up the roots and killing them.

How have your peas done this year ?

The Excelsior peas that I got from you did well. I sowed them in the sod, and it was difficult to cover them well. They were a little thin, but for all the yield will be from 30 to 36 bushels to the acre. They are the best I know of. A neighbor complains that the wire worm has been very injurous to his crops. I have advised him to sow salt on the field, a remedy I saw recommended in the ADVOCATE.

To the President and Directors of the Provincial Boards of Agriculture.

GENTLEMEN—We address you, with no desire to censure or condemn, but believing that however good your present system of managing the agricultural affairs of this Dominion, there is much room for improvement. We know it is your desire to advance and do more good, and believe you will concide with us and endeavor to carry out some of our suggestions. One of the most, perhaps the most, important subjects is seed, to which we would wish to draw your attention. The present mode for awarding prizes for grain is for two bushels. Your printed regulations may be good in restricting the prize to the growth of the year the exhibition is held, but we must regret that our best judges are not always able to decide if grain has been grown but a few months or a few years. We have reason to believe that imported grain has often taken prizes as Canadian grown grain. Who could detect it ? We know grain is often kept from year to year to exhibit ; also some of the prize grain is prepared by an immense amount of labor. After the fanning mill may have done its work, throwing and hand picking are resorted to to procure one bag of grain ; that bag is often not procurable at any price—it has to do its work as a prize taker at many exhibitions. Perhaps for many seasons we do not wish to see this prize taken away, but a little more vigilance on the part of the judges might be advantageous. We hope to see the cleaning process kept up at any cost, but we would like to see a fairer representation of our cereals. We think an additional prize might be given to those that raise a general sample of good, clean, pure seed. Two bushels might be sufficient to enter, or even one, but growers on exhibition should be able to supply 25, 50, or 100 bushels, just as clean and pure, and a price should be put on the grain so that purchasers might procure one or more bags if they desired it. If the sample supplied by the exhibitor to the purchaser was not quite equal to the sample exhibited, the exhibitor's name should be published and his prize money forfeited, and he should be procluded from exhibiting for five years. There is no necessity for every exhibitor being at the expense of taking 25, 50, or 100 bushels of grain to exhibit. One or two bushels would be be enough. A good liberal prize might be given in the classes of wheat, oats, peas and barley that are most in demand. The grain of our country is about as important as our stock. Compare the amount paid in prizes for stock with that of grain. We believe out of fairness to the grain growers, and for the benefit of those wishing to procure good seed, and for the increase of wealth in our Dominion some such plan as the above might most advantageously be introduced.

Cereals.

The seed business is a disgrace to us. To Canada. And to the United States, as nearly all cereals imported from the United States by us have been foul, Eight years have we toiled and expended the price of several farms, to bring before the farmers of Canada the actual necessity of having some establishment in our country where seeds can be tested and procured. We have imported from the States, from Europe, and have procured the best we could hear of from any Canadian seedsman or farmer. We have had samples hand picked to send out for seed, and now we appear to approach the result of our anticipation, very slowly. During the past month we had an application from England for 200 bushels of good, clean, plump, white oats. We applied for samples through our paper, which is taken by all the leading farmers—the last issue of our paper being 7,500, which on the full computation of the average readers of each paper being eight, thus the paper should be read by 60,000 persons, and among them all we do not know, nor do we believe, that 200 bushels of really plump, pure, white oats are to be found. We say it is a disgrace to you, to me, to our Agricultural Societies, and to our Government, that we are compelled to turn a British order away unfulfilled, simply because we cannot find 200 bushels of oats in Canada fit to ship as clean, pure, plump seed, as we cannot procure really clean, pure and good samples of wheat or oats in Canada or the States. We hope yet to live long enough to see that we shall be able to ship 200, or 2000, bushels of clean, pure, plump oats when required. We think it is better not to fill this order at all than to fill it badly. Our petition is now before the Legislature for a charter to allow farmers to join their capital together and establish the Canadian Emporium on a proper foundation. We will labor to remedy this evil of being obliged to send out mixed seed, if we can, and now we will strike a blow at the root of the evil.

Commendable.

In open Council 1st February, 1873.

The following Report of the Committee on Agriculture of the County of Middlesex was unanimously adopted :—

"Your Committee beg leave to report that they would recommend this Council to recommend William Weld to the Legislature of Ontario, for his valuable services in the advancement of the agricultural interest of Ontario by the establishment of his Agricultural Emporium and FARMERS' ADVOCATE, and by the introduction, testing and disseminating of seeds and grain ; and whereas, he has invested a large amount of capital in the same, this Council would recommend that he receive some substantial remuneration, and would also recommend the patronage of the public generally for his arduous and unflinching labors in this most worthy enterprise."

(Signed), LIONEL E. SHIPLEY,
Chairman.

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy. JAMES KEEFER,
Clerk of the County of Middlesex.