



## AGRICULTURAL EXCURSION TO THE FARM OF MR. MECCHI.

*Report of the Deputation from the Maidstone Farmers' Club, to inspect the Farm of Mr. Mechi, at Tiptree-Hall, Essex.*

The deputation arrived at Tiptree Hall at about nine o'clock on the morning of the 16th July, and were received by Mr. Mechi in the most cordial and friendly manner.

Mr. Mechi purchased Tiptree Hall Farm in 1843. It had been let previously for £150 per annum, when the produce was estimated at only £5 per acre. Mr. Mechi laid out in the purchase of the farm and its improvements (according to his letter of June 11th, 1844,) the following sums:—

Purchase of farm, 130 acres, . . .	£3,250	0	0
Draining, fencing, levelling, ditching, and roads, . . . . .	2,900	0	0
Barn, stabling, tanks, sheds, yards, &c., . . . . .	2,000	0	0
House and offices, . . . . .	1,000	0	0
Machinery, implements, cooking apparatus, &c., . . . . .	500	0	0
Manure, marl, &c. . . . .	500	0	0
	£9,450	0	0

The improvements of Mr. Mechi are thus described in his published "Letters on Agricultural Improvement" [Longman and Co.] :—

"1st. The perfect and permanent drainage of the land with stones and pipes, 4 yards apart, and 32 inches deep—between 80 and 90 miles of drains. 2nd. The entire removal of timber trees, which cannot profitably be grown in corn fields. 3rd. The removal of old, crooked, and unnecessary banks, fences & ditches. 4th. The cutting new parallel ditches and fences, so as to avoid short lands.— 5th. The inclosure of waste, and conversion of useless bog into good soil. 6th. The economising time and distance by new roads, arches, and more direct communications with the extremities of the farm. 7th. The erection of well-arranged farm-buildings, built of brick, iron, and slate, in a continuous range, excluding all cold winds and currents of air, but open to sunny warmth. 8th. The building a substantial and genteel residence, with all due requisites for domestic comfort and economy. 9th. The erection of an efficient thrashing machine, and needful apparatus for shaking the straw, dressing the corn, cutting chaff, bruising oats, &c., so constructed as not to injure the straw; avoiding, by its perfect action, that immense waste of grain visible in almost every truss of straw we examine. 10th. The avoidance of thatch-

ing and risk of weather, by ample barn room, with convenience for in-door horse labour at thrashing, &c., when not employable without, so as to have no idle days for man or beast. 11th. The saving of every pound and pint of manure, by a tank (90 feet long, 6 feet deep, 8 feet wide, with slated roof, facing the north, and with well and pump), into which is received the whole drainage from the farm yard and stables. 12th. The conveyance by iron gutters and pipes of every drop of water from the roofs of each building, so as in no manner to dilute the manure in yards. 13th. The perfect drainage of the foundations of the barn, and every building on the farm. 14th. A cooking-house to prepare food for cattle."

Mr. Mechi has removed 200 timber trees; 5,000 yards of fences; filled up a large number of crooked ditches, and dug straight ones. He has since estimated that if his drains had been laid down, as recommended by Mr. Parkes, the engineer, 4 ft. deep, instead of 30 inches, he should have saved £800, and drained his farm equally well, or better. We do not think that a tree or pollard exists on Mr. Mechi's farm, the former high banks have been levelled, and the immense quantity of earth which these contained has been either burned, or mixed with lime ashes, and turned over and over, before being returned to the fields as manure. All the drainage of the house, stables, cow-houses, and piggeries, are drained into the manure-pit, into which all the dung is carried. The distance is in no case farther to carry it, than to the centre of an ordinary farm-yard, and the labour of wheeling it there, being on a smooth road, is not one-fourth of that of wheeling it through a dung-yard. It has been said that Mr. Mechi has no yards. He has no use for yards, except for watering. All his food is given in the manger, and the only use he makes of the iron-horse-racks in his stable is for holding lumps of rock salt. All the buildings have gutters, which carry off every drop of rain-water. The granary is at the north end of the barn, over the horse-wheel, so that both litter and food are close at hand. The horses are fed on cut green tares and straw, and beans and oats crushed.

It is, however, whilst standing on the floor of the thrashing machine in the barn, that the spectator is most struck with the comprehensiveness and completeness of the internal arrangements, of which this is the centre. On one side is seen a large barn, with a level floor,

so that several carts can be drawn into the bays; whilst at right angles with the barn is a spacious loft, nearly 100 feet long, to receive the straw. The thrashing machine is a very powerful one, driven by six horses, and the straw is submitted to the operation of three "shaking" cylinders before it leaves the machine (which it does in an unbroken state), so that scarcely a single grain can escape; below is the cleaning machine, and attached to the horse-wheel is a chaff-cutter, which cuts 28 trusses per hour, and a crushing, or rather bruising machine; and a turnip-cutter. All the roots are washed by a washing machine; being then cut, and steamed with chaff, bran, and meal.

The dung-pit is an excellent arrangement, and may be called the laboratory of the farm. Into this receptacle are carried *under drains* from every source of manure on the farm, so as to prevent its contact with the air as much as possible. In these dung-pits, which are perfectly sheltered from the sun and rain, and have a northern aspect, the dung is frequently turned in wet weather, and being nearly all short, it undergoes an incipient fermentation, and can be carried out in about three weeks.

Attached to the manure-pit is the liquid manure-tank, the contents of which are the very essence of the dung, and are prized and preserved accordingly. It is frequently thrown over the dung in the pits, and also carried on to the land in one of Crosskill's liquid manure carts. The great care which is taken to preserve this valuable substance, is one of the best points of Mr. Mechi's management.

The sheep yards are well drained, warm and airy; Mr. Mechi has found that brick paving does not answer as well as he expected, as the bricks absorb too much moisture. He therefore places in each yard a layer of chalk rubbish, which completely absorbs the moisture that is not carried off, and forms a compost highly suitable to the stiffest soil.

The piggeries are exceedingly comfortable, the ranging places being formed of iron hurdles, which freely admit the air and sun. There is no one feature of the farm more striking than the generally comfortable appearance of the animals. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how any animal can fail to thrive in so well sheltered a place. Mr. Mechi fats a large number of young pigs on steamed swedes and corn, with a little cake. For this purpose, each of his yards is surrounded with a low lean-to against the walls.—