

Talk with Farmers.

TURNIPS, THISTLES, ETC.

"And how soon do you mean to go?"

"I can't go till I have sown my turnips."

"What sort of soil is yours?"

"Well, you know Pickering. At my place the soil is good and pretty sharp; not sand, but lightish."

"Have you been afraid of the fly?"

"No, but I was afraid of the drought; and I determined not to sow till we had rain; then the ground would be damp enough to bring them up, and there would be no fear of their doing well."

"How do you sow them?"

"In drills; and I always plough the manure in the ridge. I find the turnips do better."

On my saying that my county of Wellington friends preferred manuring in the fall, he replied:

"No doubt that plan does well in their land, but we want the manure right under the turnip; we get a better crop, and they are heavier in the ground."

I remarked "Is it not strange that the turnip seed will not lie in the ground like charlock and wild mustard, and come up when the soil is favourable?"

He replied: "I have often wondered at that fact myself; the seeds are alike, and the plants are the same nature, and are both oily seeds, and yet the charlock will lie in the ground any number of years, and grow when a favourable opportunity occurs; whilst the turnip seed must grow or rot; and if it once grows, and cannot come on well, it perishes and is lost. On one occasion (he continued) I found it advisable to put the plough down a couple of inches more than it used to be done, and I had such a crop of charlock as I never saw before; and yet, on inquiry, I could not learn that any charlock had been known to grow on that field before in the memory of any one, so that you see it must have lain in the soil, ready to come as soon as the proper moment arrived."

We discussed the vitality of seeds for some time, and I mentioned that within a few years past the site of an old Roman fort in England had been turned up by searchers after antiquarian matters, and although the ground had been in rough hill pasture for centuries, yet the turning up of the soil produced a plentiful crop of oats. He wondered greatly at this, but supposed they must have been the wild oats, the extent of the vitality of the seed of which is unknown; "and that is the reason," said he, "that I don't like your western country; they have such a lot of wild oats there, and I am real feared of them. I don't mind Canada thistles, but I am afraid of wild oats."

I told him that a man who did not fear Canada thistles need not fear wild oats, that I

was well used to them, and that we dreaded the thistles much more. "But," I remarked, "what way do you go to work with the thistles?"

"Now, I'll tell you," he replied. "When I took my present farm in Pickering (I have had it over twelve years), I found it greatly impoverished, and dreadfully overrun with thistles. There was no straw or hay on the place, and not a single load of manure, for all had been sold that could be sold. It was a poor look-out for me, for the rent had to be paid at any rate. There was one field of sixteen acres that was as full of thistles as it could be. I had determined to summer fallow it, but on account of the thistles put the ploughing off until the thistles were well grown and just balling for flower. They were so thick that the horses could not face them—neither could I—and I had to get the whole field mowed from one side to the other. I kept a man going before the plough, and in the afternoon, when the horses were off, I went in myself with the man with the scythe, and together we kept room for the plough, but with hard work. The ground was very dry, and I could only plough shallow, but I turned in all I could, and the thistles were so weakened with growth that they did not spring quick, and so I finished the whole sixteen acres. Well, this was my only hope for fall wheat, so, as I felt sure all the top soil was worn out, I determined to rip it up deeply, and I therefore went to the saw mill and got a piece of elm scantling, and made a doubletree for three horses. I put three heavy horses on the plough, and tore up the land to fully a foot deep. It was a dry time, and the thistles perished fast on being exposed. After a while I gave it another ploughing, just in time for fall wheat, but I kept the plough shallow, so that I put the freshly moved bottom soil back into the middle of the newly ploughed ground. I had a good time for the wheat; it did well, and I had so large a crop that all the neighbours came to see it; the like had not been seen on that farm for many a year, and I had a noble crop. I seeded the wheat down with clover, cut the clover the next year, and that is the last I have seen of the Canada thistles in that field. That land, with good management, has done well ever since, and I have had no poor crops from it. On the other part of the farm I was troubled in the same way with thistles, but where I could not do with them as I did with the first, I summer fallowed them. I took one crop, seeded it down, then mowed the grass the following year, and again summer fallowed, and that finished all the thistles. This is why I am not afraid of them."

"Do you sow many turnips?"

"Yes, all I can get in and manage. I am on a rented farm, recollect, and if I had no turnips I could neither pay rent nor live. As it is, during the twelve years I have paid over three thousand five hundred dollars in

rent, and have done well besides. I have paid in rent more than the price of the land. I grew last year more than ten acres of turnips."

"Well," I said, "but some of our farmers tell me that they can't grow turnips, that labour is too high, and the crop too expensive."

"That all is nonsense," he said; "I make more off six acres of turnips than I could off fifty-six acres of grain, and were it not for them I should have neither manure nor fertility."

"Whet cattle do you prefer, and how many do you fatten?"

"I prefer the grade Durhams, and always breed mine myself. I get them so that I fatten them at from two to three years old, and I can fatten one beast to an acre of turnips, besides keeping all my stock. I always give each beast, however, about five bushels of grain, and this and chopped hay and straw I strew over the chopped up turnips."

"Do you ever pulp the turnips?"

"No, I have never seen them used in that way; but I hear great accounts of it, and I shall try it soon; but I want to get a farm of my own; I am tired of paying rent."

"What sort of a job would you make among the stumps and roots?" I asked. "I fear that in clearing new land it would break your heart to see things go on as they must go on a new farm. You understand old cleared land, and can do well on it. Why should you not stick to it? If you want a farm, buy a cleared one; there are plenty who want to sell."

But still he seemed to want to battle with the forest and the stumps. Like Alexander, he wanted new worlds to conquer.

Now, this man's story is a most instructive one. He was sober and industrious, and intelligent. He rented a farm that was apparently worn out and covered with every kind of noxious weed. He had but little capital. He found no manure on the farm, no straw, no hay, and nothing but old worn-out pasture, and yet, by the exercise of his native talents and care and judgment he had (out of the worn-out land itself) been able, not only to pay a good rent, keep his family respectably, and acquire a considerable capital, but he had brought the farm into good tillage, had improved it in every respect, and it was to-day in a far better state of fertility than it ever was before. My friend was a Scotchman, of course, but he is a bright example of what can be done, and how old and worn out land can be rendered productive. What will sneerers at the farmer say to all this?

WORN-OUT FARMS.

"Why should you want to sell your farm and move to a new one? I know it is a good one, and in a fine situation."

"Yes, it is; but I have a large family, five boys and four girls, and the farm is not big enough to employ them all. I would