

Communications.

A FEW USEFUL HINTS.

For the Agriculturist.

The late Benjamin Bell, Esq., of Huntly, Scotland, made various experiments to ascertain whether light or imperfect seed would vegetate and produce a crop equal to what might be obtained from seed perfectly ripened and safely harvested. The result of these experiments strongly confirms what has been urged with respect to the use of mildewed or diseased grain for seed.

We may only mention that Dr. Bell, in October, 1783, sowed a field of fifteen acres with thirty-six bushels of wheat, of which eight bushels was the best that could be provided in the London market of crop 1782. Twenty bushels of the produce of East Lothian crop, 1783, was also used, and four bushels of the best wheat in the London market, of crop 1782, and four bushels of the produce near Edinburgh in the same year, made out the total quantity. Here it must be remarked, that 1782 was a season generally unfavorable to raising wheat in perfection, but that in 1783, that grain was sound and of excellent quality. The field upon which the above parcel of wheat was sown was well fallowed and equally manured with dung, and the whole seeds were sown in the beginning of October, after each of them had been washed in strong brine, and afterwards dried with new staked lime. The English seed of crop 1783, was sown on one side of the field, and two bushels of Mid Lothian seed of crop 1782, on three ridges next to it. To this succeeded the English wheat, and next to it the other two bushels of Mid Lothian wheat of 1782. The field being all in good condition, the wheat appeared early above the surface, and the shoots were every where strong, excepting on those ridges sown with Mid Lothian wheat of crop 1782, on which the plants were weak, and not very numerous. Neither did they spread or tiller like the others; so that during the winter and spring month, the wheat on those ridges made a weak appearance, and in harvest the straw was not only thin and of little length, but the ears were short and small, and the grain on this part of the field was not so large or heavy as on other parts.

It was also found on being thrashed and measured, that the produce of the wheat of crop 1782 was only forty-four bushels, or twenty bushels for four; whereas, the produce of the rest of the field was fully sixty bushels for every four of seed sown. The difference in value was also considerable, the produce of the Mid Lothian wheat selling one shilling and three pence per bushel lower than the others.

From the above statement a powerful motive occurs for using only the best grain for seed—the truth of which cannot be too strongly inculcated. That light or imperfect seed will vegetate and send forth a stalk or plant, may easily be admitted, but that the produce of that stalk or plant will not be so healthy or good as what may be obtained from plants of well filled seed, will scarcely be questioned by any one who is not a slave to system.

Very great pains have been used by British breeders to procure animals from the best and most approved kinds of cattle and sheep; but were it admitted that light, diseased and imperfect grain was capable of making an equal return to the grower, quantity and quality being taken into consideration, it is plain that the breeders of live stock are demonstrably wrong in selecting the strongest and best proportioned animals as the basis of their breeding stock. In making these selections, however, every man will acknowledge that they acted with judgment; therefore it necessarily follows, that the growers of grain who make use of defective seed for sowing their fields, neither consult their own interest nor act with that degree of judgment and understanding which ought to influence and govern every good husbandman.

The farmer who practises husbandry upon proper principles should not only have his fields under all kinds of grain, but likewise a sufficient quantity of grass and grain crops for maintaining his stock of cattle and sheep through all the different seasons of the year. By laying out land in this style, the economy of a farm is so regulated, that while improvements progressively go forward, too much work does not occur at one time, nor occasion for idleness at another.

Suppose two farmers of the same substance, and living upon similar farms; one manages his land with judgment and spirit, makes all the manure he can; sells no hay or straw; does not injudiciously crop his land; drains his fields, and keeps his live stock and fences in good order.—This man grows rich; the other, a sloven in these particulars, dwindles into poverty. These are the circumstances which make the one man rich and the other poor.

Another consideration of great importance is, not to take a farm that may require more money to purchase and stock it well than the farmer is in possession of. Farmers are usually very eager after quantity; the certain consequence of which is a slovenly system of management. Let any one consider the difference between good and bad farming in all its branches: the one is certain loss and the other certain gain. A profitable and proper use of manure, let the farmer now hold in remembrance, is the life and soul of husbandry; therefore those who know the best how to prepare it, and afterwards how to apply it, can scarcely fail of being successful in any situation. Quality of manure is to be considered above quantity—much depends upon how live stock are fed in winter—the better they are fed, the better the manure. With regard to lime, guano, bone dust and plaster, that can only be obtained by those who have money at command.

The advantage of changing seed. In the same field, all equally dressed, one and a half bushels of oats from a different soil and situation; and one and a half bushels of oats grown on the farm not changed for some years, twenty-five bushels were the produce of the former, and twenty bushels the produce of the latter. The produce of the changed seed weighing most and a greater weight of straw.