

Without pretending to reconcile the points of difference, (which are very few) between the foregoing opinions, we shall enter upon the leading circumstances of this very curious district.

First, as to its *Soil and Culture*.

The soil is, for the most part, a retentive clay, except near the sea coast, where it becomes a siliceous loam, to which the long and uninterrupted application of sea weed and calcareous sand has in a great measure contributed. The farms are, in general, of very small extent—from 3 acres to 100, very few, indeed, of the latter description, not a great many over 20, and mostly from 7 to 10 acres.\* Small farmers may therefore acquire some interesting information from the management of such minute divisions.

These farms are subdivided into very limited enclosures, the fields being nearer to half an acre than to any other quantity; the fences, almost universally, are narrow dikes, with high banks planted upon each side with two or three rows of furze; both circumstances having probably originated in the necessity of drainage, and the want of fuel.

The manures, exclusively of the farm yard manure, are marl, lime, sea weed, and sea sand. In some of the interior parts of the baronies, and in a cold vein running northwest from Grenore Point, termed the Claylands, the deficiency of the soil is marked by inferior crops: but, in general, the produce is very great, and near the sea coast most abundant.

The usual crops are wheat, barley, oats, beans, potatoes, and clover; hemp and flax are also universally sown in small quantities, to supply the domestic consumption.

Wheat, according to the soil and preparation, yields from 6 to 10 barrels of 20 stone (14lb. to the stone) per plantation or Irish acre. Barley [the most general crop] yields from 12 to 20 barrels of 16 stone. Beans from 10 to 12 barrels of 20 stone. Potatoes from 80 to 120 barrels of 20 stone.

A chief merit in the agriculture of this district seems to be the systematic relation which is uniformly observed: which, though it may with some individuals occasionally vary, is nevertheless, in general, as follows:—

1st, Wheat upon land (either lea or stubble, as may happen) marled at the rate of 1000 load, of 5 cwt. each per acre.

2d, Barley or oats, but chiefly barley.

3d, Drilled potatoes with dung, or beans sown broadcast, with compost of earth and sea sand, or earth and dung, or earth and sea weed; the compost sometimes consisting of all those ingredients in equal proportions.

4th, Barley with red clover, or red clover and rye grass.

5th, Clover fed off or mowed, the clover seed being frequently saved from the second growth.

6th, Wheat upon clover lea, upon which they chiefly rely for their surest crop.

In some cases they feed off the clover very early, and marl the lea previously to sowing the wheat, but often sow it without marl, and apply dung to the wheat stubble for drilled potatoes, or manure it with a compost for beans, and so proceed to barley and clover again. Rye grass is in general sown with the clover, and is usually mown the following season: in very few instances it is kept for the second year, but is broken up in the foregoing rotation.

When an old lea of good quality occurs, wheat is sown upon it, ploughed, harrowed in, and shoveled. Barley is also sometimes, once but rarely, taken in this way. In general, nothing can be done without manure, and some of the farmers are even profuse in the application of it.

There are some instances of good dairy management, on a scale of from ten to twenty four cows; very few of the latter extent.

The improved barrel churn is made use of, which saves time and labour. The milk is set for only two days, and none but the cream is churned. The butter produced in this way is highly prized, and the skimmed milk is converted to making a palatable, but not very rich, cheese, which sells at three pence halfpenny per pound.

Having mentioned the usual return per acre of the different kinds of grain produce in these baronies, the quantity sown is yet to be stated, and will appear to the farmer who is accustomed to the drill husbandry, or to a dry soil, extravagantly wasteful. When a good system of draining shall be more generally practised, this profusion of seed perhaps may be reduced, as much of it must now suffer from the wetness of the soil.

The present habit is to sow, per plantation acre, twenty stone (fourteen pounds to the stone) of wheat, thirty two stone of barley, twenty eight stone of oats, and from twenty four to twenty eight stone of beans.

And though these extra quantities seem to be unnecessary, what is to be said when such an abundant return is the result; for very few indifferent crops of any kind are to be met with. Oats seem to be the worst. They do not rely on this crop to pay their rent, but sow it merely for their horses, and on the worst part of the ground.

In certain farms remarkable for producing wheat, that is made the staple grain; but, in general, barley is their favourite and money making crop, reaping, as they do, from twelve to fifteen barrels per acre, and on highly cultivated farms, or in districts near the sea, seldom less than twenty barrels per acre, and occasionally twenty five barrels.

Their method of putting in the seed is peculiar. They sow one barrel, of sixteen stone, under the plough, and a second barrel upon the surface, covering it with the harrow, thereby taking their chance

of the upper or lower stratum of seed, or of both, as the soil and season may happen to turn out.

It would seem that a crop thus sown could not come up evenly or regularly; but this does not appear to be the case. The heavy barley (previously to shooting into ear) exhibits a surface perfectly level, and apparently solid, from the intense thickness of the crop; and yet sowing under the plough is very unusual elsewhere in a strong and retentive clay. Indeed, that barley should have become the chief crop in such a soil, which is in general considered inimical to its culture, is surprising, yet it succeeds admirably, and may furnish an useful hint to countries similarly circumstanced. One advantage in the barley crop is the late season for sowing it, whereby time is gained to get rid of the superabundant moisture of the winter, and to bring the ground into proper tilth, which is here particularly attended to, the roller being in some instances made use of, but in all, the mell or pounder for breaking the balls or clods of hardened clay.

The culture of barley in those baronies owes much of its excellence to the preceding bean crop, which, being sown early and reaped late, interposes its shade to prevent the baking influence of the summer's sun, and to preserve the soil in a certain degree of friability favorable to the production of this grain.

In their management of bean husbandry, there are obvious blemishes; but all remonstrance is silenced by their produce, twenty barrels being not unusual, when the crop hits—seldom less than ten. Casualties will sometimes occur, and an occasional blast will disappoint; therefore the farmer relies not upon this crop, but on the following one of barley, for his rent; but when it succeeds, which it does three times out of four, none can pay better, even at a middle price, and at a middle produce. Suppose fifteen barrels an acre, at thirty shillings a barrel, twenty two pounds ten shillings an acre. The price varies in the market at Wexford from seventeen to forty shillings a barrel.

They sow their beans universally broadcast. This system is defended on the principle of the soil being retentive, which they conceive would not be in sufficient order to admit the plough as often as might be necessary; whereas by sowing about Christmas (which is the habit), and trenching up the beds, from three to six feet wide, no further operation is necessary till they come to pull and harvest the crop.

Notwithstanding the profusion of seed made use of in the former cases, an economy too rigid is observed with respect to clover, eighteen pounds being the highest, but, almost universally, fourteen pounds allowed to the acre.

That a common farmer, purchasing expensive seed, should limit his quantity as much as possible, would not surprise; but here, for the most part he saves his own clover seed, which would entitle him to sow it liberally.

The method by which they save clover seed is very simple, and has nothing in it of that supposed difficulty which deters the farmer from adopting it, and forces him to relinquish the advantage of this valuable rotation crop, or to procure it by means of foreign seed, at considerable expense.

It is merely this. They let the first growth of the clover be fed off, at an early season, in general by the middle of May. The second growth is suffered to run to seed. When fully ripe, particular attention is paid to the careful saving of the hay, which, when perfectly dry, is immediately well thrashed, whereby the ripest of the seed is shaken from the hulls; and the hulls or heads being thus separated from the stalks and put through the stones of a common oat mill, all the remaining seed is thereby extracted. Some farmers merely thrash for the prime grain, and sow the hulls under the harrow; nor are they even thus disappointed in the crop.

This is a feature in the rural economy of these baronies well worthy of imitation. It is the basis of a rotation system, which would be generally adopted but for the cost of the clover seed.

The common farmer does not want intelligence to perceive the value of a clover crop, but he generally wants the means to procure it.

If a certain rotation of sowing be allowed to be beneficial, the farmer should have the respective seeds within himself. He takes care to be provided with his potatoes, wheat, barley or oats, from the year before; and by taking the hint from the English baronies, he may also have this connecting crop of a profitable succession, without being obliged to send to a distant and expensive market for the seed.

It is to be hoped, that, from its being ascertained in this district that clover seed saved at home produces an abundant crop, the practice may spread to other places; nor should the farmer be alarmed by want of perfect success, in consequence of a bad season, or other disappointing circumstances; unless he intend it for sale, the brightness of the colour, and plumpness of the seed, are not of very great importance. In case of a strong proportion of decayed and unprofitable grains in the parcel which he has saved, he has only to increase his quantum of seed per acre in a similar proportion, and his object will be still attained.

#### HABITATIONS AND MANAGEMENT.

The inhabitants of these baronies are enabled, by the industrious and skilful management of their farms, to avail themselves of the comforts and decencies of life, in a degree seldom to be remarked amongst the lower orders of Irish. Their habitations, though built with clay, are neat, cleanly, and commodious; stone is not to be had without great expense; but the surprising expertness with which this substitute is handled and moulded into habitable form

\* Four acres Irish make eight English.