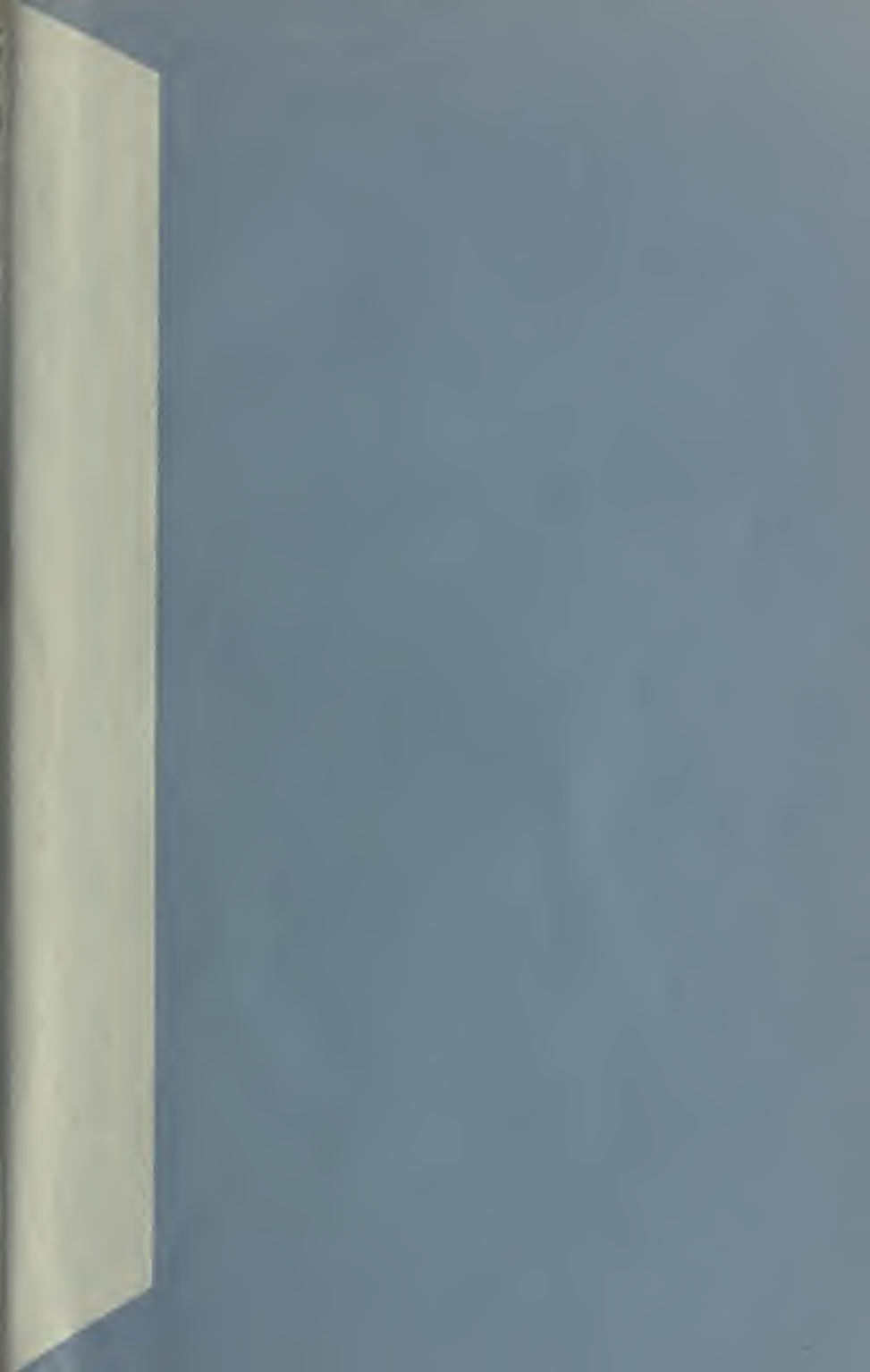


Denton, John Bailey
The agricultural labourer

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THE
AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

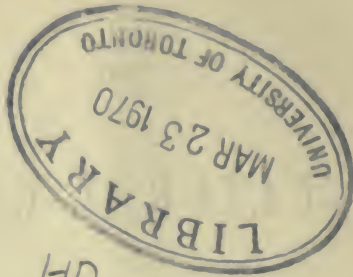
By J. BAILEY DENTON, Esq.,

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF ENGLAND AND THE ROYAL
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THIS reprint of a paper read at the Society of Arts is dedicated to CLARE SEWELL READ, Esq., the faithful representative of the Agricultural Classes in Parliament, at whose request it is published in its present separate form.

1870
The following is a list of the names of the persons who were present at the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Bank of the City of New York, held on the 10th day of January, 1870.

ON THE
CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

AT a time when the education of the wage-paid classes is receiving much public attention, and when we are just on the eve of a great political change, by which all classes will be admitted into the exercise of the electoral franchise except one—the working class in agriculture—I have thought it possible that a few words from one who for many years has directed the operation of a large number of agricultural labourers, and who necessarily feels a great interest in their welfare, might have some influence upon those who are giving their attention to the means by which their condition may be improved.

Having alluded to the new franchise about to be exercised under the “Representation of the People Act, 1867,” let me at once disclaim all intention to give a political bearing to the observations I am about to make. I respect too highly the standing rule of this Society (*Society of Arts*)—of the Council of which I happen to be a member—that political discussions should be avoided in this room, to break it intentionally. But though it is my purpose to treat the subject in a practical manner, I should fail in impressing upon others its full importance if, in the first place, I did not call attention to the

fact that at the next general election that class of the community known as the agricultural labourer will be the only operative class which will be excluded from voting. I should much like, at a proper time and place, to enlarge on this point, for, in the practical view I take of the matter, I fail to discover any reason why operatives living in boroughs should be admitted to the franchise, while operatives living in the country should be excluded. I will now content myself by saying, that I recognise in the uneducated, dependent, and scattered condition of the latter the real reason why the country has tacitly allowed—as if by common consent—a distinction to be made between the wage-paid labourer of the factory and the wage-paid labourer of the farm.* This distinction cannot have arisen because the premises occupied by the one are more valuable than those occupied by the other, for it would be difficult to say which labourer's dwelling—the rural or the urban—costs more money to provide, and it has often been shown in this room that the actual money rent paid by the farm labourer is no criterion of the value of the premises he occupies; nor can it be, because the

* In a letter to the writer, the kind and able advocate of the labourer, the Rev. Prebendary Brereton, of Little Massingham, Norfolk (late of Devonshire), says: "I am glad that you propose to republish your paper. It will be very useful in dispelling the unreasonable and mischievous notions that prevail as to the state of the English agricultural labourer. I could have wished that you had noticed with more emphasis the wrong that is done him by omitting him from the enfranchisement bestowed on his brother operatives. Next to the truths of religion, rights of citizenship are, I believe, the most powerful educators of mankind, and as a stimulus to energy of thought they are even more needed in a rural than in an urban population." Mr. Clare Sewell Read, M.P., takes a different view, and said at the Society of Arts when this paper was read: "Mr. Denton seemed to think it rather strange that agricultural labourers were not admitted to the franchise; but they must remember that while the borough qualification had been reduced only from 10*l.* to about 4*l.*, that for counties had been reduced from 50*l.* to 12*l.*; and if the present bill was spoken of as a leap in the dark, he considered that one which would give the franchise to the agricultural labourer would be taking a jump into the bottomless pit." For my own part I shall be pleased when the labourer of the farm is placed in every respect on the same footing of citizenship as the labourer of the factory.

wages of the one are much greater than those of the other, for when the earnings of each are carefully dissected, it will be seen that there does not exist that great difference between the two which there is generally supposed to be. It can, in fact, only arise from those causes which limit his mental abilities, and prevent his increasing the value of his labour, while they depress his status in the social scale—causes which it is the duty of the country to investigate, and do its utmost to remedy.

But before I go into these causes and the remedies which commend themselves to practical and thoughtful men, I will do my best to remove the misapprehensions that prevail as to the value of the farm labourer's occupation and the amount of wages his services command. There is much in the one that affects the other, and no effort to improve the labourer's condition can be successful unless we fully comprehend the circumstances of both. The average rent of farm labourers' cottages at the present moment may be fairly stated to be rather under than over 1s. 6d. per week, which is less than 4*l.* a year. This rent is quite as much as the majority of old existing cottages are worth, for most of them have but one bedroom, and are wanting in those accommodations which are essential to decency and comfort.* Such dwellings have been, and may still be, built for about 50*l.* each, if constructed of plaster and thatch, without regard to substantiality, and 4*l.* a year—being eight per cent.—may be considered a full return, if such dwellings are admissible at all. But if we have refer-

* Sir George Jenkinson, in the observations he made upon the reading of this paper, said that "he knew of instances of hovels not fit for human beings to live in, which were owned in freehold by the occupants;" and added, truly, that in the strictures that were made on the acts and omissions of landowners, this feature in the case was not sufficiently recognised.

ence to those cottages which, under the influence of sanitary reform and sound estate economy, are taking the place of these miserable hovels, we shall find that their average cost with outbuildings, and fencing, and water supply, is 160*l.* each, or 320*l.* the pair, exclusive of the site on which they stand. This site, which would cost 15*l.* more, would make the fee-simple value of the whole 175*l.* We all know that every speculator employing capital in house building, looks for something like seven per cent. if he is to replace his capital and make five per cent. net after paying insurance and doing repairs.

If, therefore, a farm labourer paid for his occupation the rent in money which a speculator would demand, the payment, instead of 4*l.* or 5*l.*—which he still continues to pay for a good cottage as he did for a bad one—would be 12*l.* 5*s.*, which closely approximates the rateable value fixed as the qualification of a county voter, while it exceeds that of the lodger in boroughs. But it is not in money wholly that the farm labourer pays for the improved cottage, if it forms part of the farm on which he works, or is so connected with it that the farmer has command of the services of the cottager. A farmer having good cottages at his disposal can select the best workmen as his daily labourers. Moreover, as good labourers cling to comfortable homes, he can keep them, which is not the case with the occupiers of the miserable hovels that generally exist; and as newly-built cottages are now usually placed so as to reduce to a minimum the distance the labourer has to walk, whereby time and sinew are saved, the advantages to the employer are, in the aggregate, equal to the difference between the return due to the condemned hovel and that due to the improved cottage, and thus, in

point of fact, the farm labourer receives in a better home an equivalent to increased wages.

Let us now turn to the more direct earnings of the agricultural labourer, and see what they are. It appears to me that, although much has been said about wages lately, a great deal of misapprehension prevails.

It is not my object at the present moment to provoke any long discussion on the principles which govern the price of labour. That is too wide a subject, and would divert our attention too much from those facts it is most desirable to establish to remove misapprehension. But, having had some considerable experience in nearly every county in England, I desire to state shortly and distinctly the conviction at which I have arrived—that, measured by the real value of the services rendered by the agricultural labourers in different parts of England, the prices peculiar to different districts are as high as the return to be gained from those services will sanction. I consider it a fallacy to suppose that the labourers of one district are as good workmen as the labourers of another, and that for the services of each, when applied to the same object, the same money should be paid. Still, it can only be on such grounds that the proposal lately enunciated for the formation of unions, even though “established on principles strictly defensive,” among agricultural workmen, can be supported (see Appendix I.). Considering that combinations of workmen are injurious in proportion as ignorance prevails, and that the want of education is the special characteristic of the agricultural labourer, I can anticipate only the worst results from unions among them, and am quite at a loss to comprehend how any national benefit can arise by encouraging such a movement. If the labourer of Dorsetshire or Devonshire was as able a

workman as the labourer of Northumberland or Lincolnshire, a common standard of daily wages could be adopted; but the truth is that there is as much difference in the value of ordinary labour in different districts in England as there is in the character of labour in different countries abroad, and it is only consistent with sound economy that this difference should govern the price paid. In making this remark, however, I do not lose sight of the fact, that the price of labour must be regulated in some degree by the cost of maintaining labourers and their families in their own districts, so as to perpetuate and retain the race upon which the produce of the land depends.* With respect to wages, it has been my duty for the last seventeen years, when reporting on the agricultural operations of the General Land Drainage and Improvement Company, to inquire into the standing wages of every locality in which works have been executed. In addition to these inquiries, I have recently made others, and have obtained such reliable information, that I believe I am perfectly justified in stating that the present average weekly wages of the farm labourer, excluding extra allowances at hay-time and harvest, and all payments for piece-work and overtime, as well as the value of various perquisites in the shape of beer, milk, fuel, &c., are as follows :

	s.	d.
North-Eastern district	14	6
North-Western district	14	0

* Where labourers are superabundant, it is most desirable that the surplus hands should move into another district where labour is scarce; but to encourage unions with a view to raise wages in low-paid districts, without improving the quality of the work done, is cruel both to the employed and the employer, for the one will be deprived of the only sound ground of independence, while the other will be obliged to pay money for an inadequate return.

	s.	d.
Mid-Eastern district	13	0
Mid-Western district	11	0
Midland district (exclusive of Middlesex)	10	9
South-Eastern district	12	0
Mid-Southern and South-Western districts	10	6

These figures include shepherds and horse-keepers, but do not include the wages of bailiffs, where they exist, nor of other special employes, nor the earnings of labourers' wives and children. They include, however, beer and cider when they form a regular daily allowance in lieu of money—as is very frequently the case in the West of England—but not otherwise.

The mean weekly day-labour wages of able-bodied men throughout the whole of England may be taken at 12s. 6d.

To this must be added the additional gains by occasional piece-work,* extra payments at hay-time and harvest, when double the ordinary wages is frequently given, independently of the increased allowance of beer or cider. In the aggregate, the actual income derived from these employments is equal to from 1s. 6d. to 3s. a week, according to the custom of different districts. Where piece-work can wholly take the place of day-labour, a labourer may earn 25 per cent. more than by the day. The total value of the beer and cider supplied to each labourer as his allowance, at hay-time and harvest, when employed in drilling and machine threshing,

* The advantages gained by the adoption of piece-work in the place of day-labour are stated by one of our leading farmers, Mr. Charles Howard, of Biddenham, to be: 1. The work is done more expeditiously, at the proper time and with less supervision on the part of the employer; 2. It is less expensive than day-work, and payment is made for only the work done; 3. The labourer, finding his wage is regulated by the quantity and quality of the work performed, is more industrious, and exercises more skill in what he does; and 4. By placing higher wages within reach, the temptation to leave farm-work for other occupations is lessened.

and when engaged in piece-work, if spread over the whole year, would amount to from 1s. to 2s. a week more, according to locality. With these additions to his direct money wages, the farm labourer gains from 15s. to 16s. per week, taking the mean of England.

But, besides this aggregate, he gets other advantages which are unknown to the industrial labourer living in a town. The rents of the dwellings of town operatives vary from 4s. to 6s. a week, some having very good dwellings for these rents, while others are obliged to pay as much for lodgings only. Comparing these figures with the 1s. 6d., which I have stated is more than the average rent paid by the agricultural labourer for cottages equally as good or better than the dwellings of the town operative, the difference must be regarded as a gain to the former. The town operative seldom, if ever, has the advantage of a garden wherein he may grow potatoes and vegetables. His outlay for these essential articles of food is often great, particularly if he has many children to provide for. In fact, the ordinary payment for potatoes and vegetables by a mechanic, with a wife and three children, living in a town, is stated on good authority to be 2s. 6d. a week. An agricultural labourer, if he is fortunate enough to have—what he ought invariably to have—a rood of garden ground as part of his occupation, which he may cultivate after he has done his wage-paid work,—will grow upon it vegetables sufficient to yield him a return, after payment of rent and for seed, of at least 4*l.* a year, which is rather more than 1s. 6d. a week. I am assuming in this estimate that he has time and strength sufficient to do all the labour that is required to cultivate it, and that he is careful in storing the refuse of his dwelling, *i. e.*, the ashes, sewage, and waste, so that he may avoid any

payment for either labour or manure. If I am right, the labourer makes from his garden ground a profit equivalent to the rent of his cottage.

Thus it will be seen that from his house and garden the agricultural labourer gains advantages equal to at least 4s. per week, which, if added to his money returns, will raise his wages from 15s. or 16s. to 19s. or 20s.* a week, independent of what his wife and children may make, and this frequently adds 25 per cent. to his income.† I have said nothing about the gains of glean- ing, which have been estimated at 1l. 1s. 10d. to 40s.; nor about the difference in the cost of bread, meat, milk, &c., which is in favour of the country compared with towns; nor of the benefit an agricultural labourer is said to derive from the keeping of a pig, as I am doubtful myself whether anything is fairly gained by it; neither have I estimated the great advantage of pure

* If apportioned to the districts into which I have already divided the country, these figures will stand as follows:

	s.
North-Eastern district	22
North-Western district	22
Mid-Eastern district	20
Mid-Western district	18
Midland district	19
South-Eastern district	21
Mid-Southern district and South-Western district	16

† Mr. Purdy, in his valuable paper in the *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, on the rate of agricultural wages, illustrates the assistance a labourer derives from the work of his wife and children by adopting Dr. Kay's figures, given in the same journal, which show the income gained by upwards of 500 families of different sizes in Norfolk and Suffolk to be as follows:

Families.	Condition.	Average No. of children.	Average annual income.
36	Single men	£25 0
64	No children at home	30 6
166	All children under 10.....	3	22 6
130	One child above 10.....	4	25 4
92	Two children above 10 ...	5	40 5
44	Three children above 10...	6	45 6
15	Four children above 10 ...	7	50 2

country air in securing the health and strength of the labourer and his family, though all these have a money value which should be considered. I may here state that for several years past I have adopted the weekly wage of 20s. as the basis of payment to the able-bodied labourers employed by the General Land Drainage Company when away from their homes during the draining season, at which time the number has frequently exceeded 1500. The system adopted when going into fresh districts is to make the earnings of a few good practised hands, of medium capability, who follow the company's foremen wherever they go, the data for paying all other hands. The weekly work of a good gang of drainers will, if divided, give to each hand as much as from 30 to 40 rods of digging, and the price per rod will be fixed by the foreman at such an amount as to apportion to the standard men from 16s. to 22s. a week, according to the length of the day, after paying for the repair of tools. While these figures are the wages of standard workmen of average capability, the local labourers, at the commencement of the work, will seldom earn more than from 10s. to 12s. The best hands will probably be gaining at the same time from 20s. to 24s. Of course this is to be expected, and the statement is only apposite to the present inquiry, when I add the fact that, whenever a turn-out or a strike takes place, it is invariably found to have its origin in the local men, and there are many kindly disposed persons who take their part, though the result invariably shows that by perseverance they can, after a time, make as good wages as the older standard and best hands. With this knowledge it will be understood with what dismay I look upon the proposal of unions (see Appendix I.) which can only maintain inferior work at an

extravagant cost, and encourage discontent at the same time.*

The weekly earnings of different labourers, which fairly represent the class known as "industrial" operatives,† may be stated to be as follows :

Carpenters and joiners	from 18s. 0d. to 28s. 0d.
Sawyers	" 21s. 0d. to 26s. 0d.
Bricklayers	average 31s. 6d.
" labourers	" 19s. 6d.
Brickmakers	from 24s. 0d. to 30s. 0d.
Masons	average 30s. 0d.
" labourers	" 17s. 6d.
Gardeners (exclusive of head gardeners)	" 16s. 0d.
Smiths	from 26s. 0d. to 28s. 0d.
Brassfounders	" 24s. 0d. to 33s. 0d.
Painters	average 28s. 0d.
Bootmakers	from 21s. 0d. to 26s. 0d.
Tallow workers (labourers)	average 18s. 0d.
Engineers and Boiler-makers	from 25s. 0d. to 30s. 0d.

* Mr. S. Sidney stated in the discussion which followed the reading of this paper, that he "quite agreed with the observations which had been made as to the fruitlessness of encouraging the labourers to combine, and thought the gentlemen who took part in the meeting at Willis's Rooms were not so wise as well meaning, but at the same time Canon Gardlestone had proposed one of the few things which would really do the labourer good; when he found that in one parish or district the wages were very low indeed, he recommended the men to go elsewhere, and that was just what caused the great superiority of mechanics to farm labourers; they were much better educated, not so much in the way of reading and writing, but in knowledge of the world, and how best to provide for themselves, and improve their condition. The agricultural labourer must not be limited to the mere bounds of his parish, as was now too often the case. In dealing with millions of people, the only way to help them was to teach them to help themselves, and the essential point was to give them that sort of education which would make them desire more."

† Mr. David Chadwick stated, in his paper, "On the Wages of Manchester, Salford, and Lancashire," that "the wages of nearly all classes of factory operatives appear to have increased from 10 to 25 per cent. during the last twenty years."

Coal-miners	from 17s. 0d. to 27s. 0d.
Quarry men (slate)	„ 18s. 0d. to 23s. 0d.
Carters	„ 17s. 0d. to 19s. 0d.
Railway labourers (main- tenance)	„ 15s. 0d. to 20s. 0d.
Butchers' men	„ 16s. 0d. to 18s. 0d.
Police constables	average 20s. 0d.
Bakers' men	from 21s. 0d. to 26s. 6d.
Cotton workers	average 18s. 6d.
Silk workers	from 17s. 0d. to 24s. 0d.

The difference between these figures (which, it will be seen, do not cover the highest grade of trade operatives), and the wages of the agricultural labourer, is too great to exist between the two main branches of the wage-paid classes without making efforts to reduce it. It accounts for the fact that the population of our leading agricultural counties is decreasing, while that of other counties in which manufacturing towns exist is increasing with more than ordinary rapidity.* It accounts, too, for the deplorable truth, that while the industrial labourers of our towns are known to save money to provide for incapacity and old age, the utmost the agricultural labourer manages to do is by means of provident societies, if he is lucky enough to belong to one which is well managed, to provide for illness during his working age. In the breast of the former there exists a hope of accumulating money, and ultimately becoming a master, while the final prospect of the latter is, I regret to say it, nothing but pauperism and the union. Sad as this picture is, it is a satisfaction to

* The population of Lancashire has increased from 2,031,236, in 1851, to 2,429,440, in 1861, and Staffordshire from 608,716, in 1851, to 746,943, in 1861; whereas the population of Cambridgeshire has decreased from 185,405 in 1851, to 176,016, in 1861, and Norfolk from 442,714, in 1851, to 434,798 in 1861.

know that the rate of agricultural wages throughout the country has increased within these last thirty-five years quite as much as 20 per cent., while the prices of those provisions and supplies which constitute the ordinary food and necessaries of life have, on the whole, decreased in the aggregate about 10 per cent. The price of meat and cheese has increased within the last few years at an extraordinary rate. This is partly to be accounted for by the prevalence of diseases amongst cattle, and partly by the fact that the labouring classes themselves consume a great deal of meat, which was not the case in the last generation; but it is a curious fact that just fifty years ago the price of the best meat was the same as at this moment, though if we only go back half that time—twenty-five years—it was about 40 per cent. cheaper. Inferior meat has not been liable to such changes, though there has been a variation of 2d. per pound within the period mentioned. Bread, though high in price at this moment, remains at much the same cost as it was before the repeal of the corn laws. Beer, though nominally cheaper, is so much worse in quality that we cannot regard it as actually reduced in cost. Tea, coffee, sugar, and groceries generally are 50 per cent. less than they were fifty years ago. Clothes and shoes are very much cheaper also, probably from 40 per cent. to 50 per cent. The cost of fuel, on the whole, is less than it was thirty-five years ago.

Though I hope I have shown that the position of the agricultural labourer is not so bad as many represent it to be, no one can say that it is quite satisfactory; but with the profits of farming as low and uncertain as they are, *the only way to justify an increase of labourers' wages will be by rendering the value of labour greater than it now is.* With the present ruling prices of farming produce,

I repeat, it can only be by such means that the farmer can pay more for manual labour. Active hands, directed by superior intelligence, already obtain money wages above the mean of 16s. ; and as there is greater scope in agriculture for the exercise of judgment than perhaps in any other trade or pursuit, in which physical labour forms so great an element, owing to the diversity of its objects and the casualties which affect them, there is no reason to doubt but that with an increase of knowledge, on those cardinal points which alone can enhance the value of labour, the earnings of the whole class may be increased. And how is this "knowledge" to be obtained? How is the intelligence which guides the mechanical to be imparted to the agricultural labourer?

This directly brings us to the subject of education and its influence on the agricultural labourer by bringing his mind to bear on his physical duties.

The state of education among agricultural labourers was truly indicated by the Royal Commissioners appointed in 1861, to inquire into the state of public education in England, when they said that in the British Army, which, I believe, is chiefly made up out of the agricultural class, "out of 10,000 soldiers examined in 1856, more than one-fourth could not write, and more than one-fifth could not read, while in the British Foreign Legion, raised in 1855, four-fifths of the Italians and 97 per cent. of the Germans, could both read and write." Those, however, who are brought often into contact with the English farm labourer, as I happen to be, require no statistics to prove the almost total absence of education that exists among them. We can only wonder that with a nation so advanced in civilisation as our own, such a condition of mind should be allowed to lower one particular class without a general effort on

the part of all other classes to improve it. But the want of education is not to be wholly attributed to national apathy and indifference. It is due to various causes special to rural life, but perhaps the most powerful of all is, the belief that existed largely at one time, and still lingers with some few farmers, that education disqualifies a labourer for manual work in the field. This belief had its origin in the little education possessed by the majority of farmers themselves in times past, though at the present time there is no class more quickly awakening from indifference to the benefits of knowledge than the farmers. Moreover, they are not as a class to be blamed wholly for past indifference, for there were many landowners who in their turn preferred men as tenants on their estates who were not possessed of those attainments which qualified them to appreciate education in their labourers. Not many years back it was a common thing to exhibit less care for the comfort of the labourer than for the comfort of cattle; better buildings, indeed, were provided for the cows than for the labourers. But this state of things is happily gone by.

I will not here dilate on the manner in which the children of the labourer should be taught at school, nor enter upon the arguments for and against compulsory education. I am content to express my conviction that primary education at school—consisting of reading, writing, and arithmetic—is essential as the basis of improved practical knowledge, even though it be called forth in the duties of the only class now omitted from the franchise; and that, as public attention has at last been aroused to the object, the good sense of the country will rightly determine how that primary education shall be attained. To confine our efforts, however, to elementary school learning would, I contend, fail in

the object we all desire—which is, to see the farm labourer earning more money by labour of greater value to his employer. To do this, technical—that is, practical—education must be associated with primary school teaching; that his mind may be actuated with special reference to his duties. Technical education, I believe, has been more than once explained in this room to mean practical tuition in those operations which men are called on to perform in the business of life. It is, however, a term that has been exclusively used in connexion with the arts and sciences, and those businesses in which mechanical and chemical science have been mixed up. In agriculture I believe the term has never been used; but perhaps in no calling is “technical” education—if by that term we properly express practical education—more required.

I will endeavour to make this understood. There is not a farmer in the country who, be he engaged in sheep farming or in dairying, in tillage, or in mixed farming, does not know the superior value of a labourer well acquainted with special duties. Take, for instance, a shepherd. The wage of a good shepherd is 16s. a week, besides perquisites; and I venture to say that, at this moment, there is hardly any other description of agricultural service in which there are fewer capable men. A good shepherd is one of the most difficult men to obtain, and the loss to individual farmers, and to the country generally, from the want of them is very great.

Again, good horse-keepers are almost as difficult to obtain as good shepherds. From my own experience I can say that the difference between a good horse-keeper and a bad one is not to be measured by the simple difference between scanty and liberal wages. Any one accustomed to horses knows immediately, by the ap-

pearance or the touch of their skin, whether the man in charge of them knows his business; and he will confirm my opinion, that any difference in wages will be more than counterbalanced by the saving in the corn which horses will consume when well attended to, and the better service then obtained from them compared with that gained when they have been indifferently treated.

The same remark will apply to the tending of neat stock. Speaking again from my own experience, I have found that cattle, under the charge of a man who thoroughly understands them, will fatten quicker, and in every respect do much better with less food, than under a man who, from attempting indiscriminately all the duties of the farm, is master of none. In the minor matter of poultry, I have known many pounds lost by the want of proper treatment of them, and have found a labourer's wife with a small plot of ground, who has brought intelligence to bear, has raised more poultry than has been produced from a farm of several hundred acres. If this be admitted to be the case with live stock, it will be unnecessary for me to point out the advantages of employing men in the use of implements who have taken pains to understand them. The loss sustained by farmers from the careless treatment of costly implements is great. Few labourers know how to adjust them if they get out of order; and one who thoroughly understands the steam-engine, so as to take charge of it when ploughing land or thrashing corn, is indeed a prodigy in his parish. And why should we dread the purchase and use of steam-engines on our farms, on the ground that we have not a labourer who could take care of them, when tuition in youth would supply the omission? It is true that my friend, Mr. Howard, of Bedford, now and then undertakes to tutor

a farm labourer in the management of the engine, if he is previously assured of his intelligence. This circumstance, while it shows how an individual difficulty may be overcome, must go some way to prove that technical education is to be attained in the lowest grade of agriculturists, as in the more refined artisan class. It would be tedious to pass through all the branches of a farmer's business, to show how technical knowledge in the labourer would apply. There is hardly an operation in tillage that would not be done better, if the operator had early understood it. Take the simple operations of ploughing, drilling, and sowing; is not a good workman worth 1s. or 2s. more per week than a bad one? The same observation applies to hedging, ditching, draining, and thatching, in which there is no comparison between an expert man and an unpractised one. I have myself sent miles for a good thatcher, and for a hedger who has understood his work.

How, then, are these practices to be taught in youth? I will do my best to explain.

The only reasonable ground for keeping the children of an agricultural labourer from school, is the circumstance that, having hungry stomachs to fill, and active bodies to clothe, they must earn something to pay for the food they eat and the clothes they wear; and so weighty is this excuse with some men of high position and character, that they are led to doubt the policy of compelling attendance, even for the limited number of hours yearly which it is proposed the children should be at school. Still, so essential is primary knowledge, that we may with certainty assume that this objection, weighty though it be, will give way to general opinion. And what I would suggest would be, that those children who attend school for the limited time determined upon,

when earning their food and clothes by labour, should be placed in a situation to obtain fundamental technical—or, if it be better, to call it "*practical*"—knowledge on the farm; not by placing them indiscriminately one day to do one thing and the next another, merely to meet the convenience of the moment, but by putting them for a sufficient time under the shepherd, or the horse-keeper, or the stock-keeper, or the engineer, or the hedger and ditcher, or the thatcher, that they may learn, as far as such labourers can teach them, the duties of their future calling. The only difference between the present system and that which I would suggest would be, that a youth employed on a farm should be so systematically engaged that he should early learn, by a species of apprenticeship, all that can be practically taught upon it, and that the shepherd, the dairyman, or the engine-man, as the case may be, with whom he should be placed, should receive a bonus for teaching him all he knows. In order to be assured that these teachers deserve their bonuses, the youths should, at certain periods, undergo examination, and, where it be practicable, be made to compete with other youths for prizes. All that would be required in the way of national, district, or outside aid, would be the provision of qualified examiners, and the means of paying the teachers their fees, and the youths their prizes. Already we have throughout the country, in the autumn, matches in ploughing, ditching, and draining, and the interest that the labouring men take in the competitions, may be taken as some proof that, under proper control, competitive trials may be extended to farming youths engaged in various agricultural duties. The payments to the labourers for teaching, and the youths for learning, would each act favour-

ably in maintaining superior services on the farm, and thus the farmer himself would naturally become interested, and would give his support to the system. Youths would gain at one and the same time primary education at school and practical information on the farm, and the two descriptions of knowledge would tell with increasing advantage upon each other, and would finally effect what is really wanted—an improvement in the quality of the labourer's work, so that he may command increased wages for that work from his employer.*

At present the beer-shop is a great bar to the improved condition of the agricultural labourer. The influence of drink on an uneducated mind cannot be better shown than by the fact that beer or cider will go much farther than its equivalent in money in inducing men to exert themselves, although the money could be taken home by the labourer for the benefit of the wife and children as well as himself, while the beer or cider if drunk is dissipated in selfish indulgence. The quality of the beer and cider sold in the lowest-waged districts is the worst. If it be right to facilitate the selling of beer and cider, let it be wholesome and pure. At present beer is generally adulterated, or "doctored," as they term it, to suit the taste of the labouring man, and its effects are not to be measured by its immediate action on the system. It tells equally upon the physical energies of the man as upon the moral powers of his mind. It prostrates both. The quantity of beer drunk

* Mr. Prebendary Brereton says: "Your remarks on technical or practical education are interesting and important." "I am convinced that much may be done and ought to be done in this direction, but public opinion, especially in the influential classes, has been all against it." Mr. Lawson, of Morpeth, writes to me:—"The proposal of training labourers (youths) to particular kinds of labour is thoroughly sound."

in the hay and harvest time would surprise many of my hearers, though in the ordinary disbursements of a labourer—as ascertained by Mr. Purdy, of the Poor Law Commission—only one instance appears on record in which an expenditure in beer has been entered in the housekeeping expenses. I presume that case was the only one in which the wife had partaken of it as a necessary item of food. It is nevertheless true, that during harvest every able-bodied male labourer drinks beer which costs from 8d. to 1s. a day, taking the average of harvests in the eastern corn-growing counties. I should be sorry to condemn beer as an article of food when properly made with good malt and hops, but that article, as I have just said, is seldom to be met with. The liquid sold as beer in rural districts satisfies thirst at the time, and provokes it as soon as drunk. I cannot speak too strongly against the prevailing excessive use of bad beer and cider. It is the bane of the farm labourer. In those counties in the west of England where cider is used instead of beer, the impoverished condition of the agricultural labourer is even worse than where beer prevails. His inferiority in work is mainly to be attributed to the bad character of the cider, and the excessive use made of it. There is some proof of the injurious influence of excessive drinking in the fact that in all the worst paid districts—where labour commands the lowest wages, and where those wages are all that the labour is worth—the publican and beer-seller bear a far larger proportion to the number of agricultural labourers than is the case in those districts where the wages are higher and where the labour is more valuable. We often hear mentioned the low rate of wages in the county of Dorset, and comparisons are made with the wages ruling in other

counties. When we turn to the statistics giving the occupation of the people in the population returns of the last census, we find that whereas in Lincolnshire, which I select as the best-cultivated county in England, the number of agricultural labourers is 52,871, and the number of people living by the sale of beer is 1317, in Dorsetshire the number of agricultural labourers is 19,434, and the number of persons selling beer and cider is 582, showing a proportion in the former case of one beer-seller to 40 agricultural labourers, and in the latter, one beer-seller to 33 labourers.

The proportion in Lincolnshire is much too high ; but what is to be said of Dorsetshire, where the labourers, earning only two-thirds of the wages of Lincolnshire, support a larger proportion of beer and cider sellers ? The figures given, moreover, do not fully represent the real state of things as regards the extent to which the beer and cider is drunk in Dorsetshire, as in that county a great deal of cider is given in lieu of money wages, whereas in Lincolnshire no such regular practice prevails either with respect to beer or cider.

But I can illustrate this important part of the question by stating a case, within my experience, which can hardly fail to exhibit the fact that low wages and inferior work are associated with a preponderating use of beer or cider. In the year 1852 I had the control of some extensive drainage works in Dorsetshire, and at that time the agricultural money wages of the district ranged from 7s. to 9s. a week. Impressed that such pay was inconsistent with suitable labour, I imported into the work some north-country labourers from Northumberland, practised in draining, to afford an example for such local men as chose to enter the trenches and dig by the piece. I guaranteed to the northern men a

minimum of 18s. a week, although I could command the services of as many Dorsetshire labourers as I desired to employ at half that price. The result showed that I was right in bringing high-priced competent men amongst low-priced inferior ones, for as soon as the Dorsetshire men knew what the north-country men were getting, and saw the character of the work executed by them, they applied all their energies in imitation. At first they drank more beer, thinking that by such means they could do more work. They soon saw their error, and it was both amusing, and instructive at the same time, to see how struck they were when they found that the northern men had for their dinners good meat and bread, while they were living on bread, tobacco, and miserable beer or cider. It was by very slow degrees that the Dorsetshire men realised the truth that butchers' meat was more strengthening than bad beer. Eventually, by the example afforded them, the "technical education" given them by the Northumberland men, and by the effect of improved food, the despised Dorsetshire men were enabled to earn as much as their teachers, and it was not long before I actually removed them into the north of England, to compete with Yorkshire men in the work they had learned; and the first place at which they were engaged was Swine, in Holderness, where there did not exist a public-house or a beer-shop in the village.

I have given these details, hoping they will serve two objects—by proving, first, the evil of beer and the good of beef; and next, the benefit of technical or practical teaching as a means by which the quality of labour may be improved, and the earnings of low-waged districts increased.

If this experience of mine fails to convey what I

mean, I can perhaps show that inferior work, low wages, and excess of drink, are attended by a greater amount of pauperism than belongs to districts where better labour, higher wages, and less beer prevail, by quoting from Mr. Purdy the result of figures he has given in his paper published in the *Journal of the Statistical Society* (vol. xxiv., p. 346), which prove that whereas, in an example district in Dorset and Wilts, where the weekly wages were 9s. 6d., the rate of relief to the poor was 8s. 2d. per head on the population, in a similar district in Cumberland and Northumberland, where the weekly wages were 14s. 6d., the rate of relief was only 5s. 5d.

Thus far I have spoken of those means of improving the condition of the agricultural labourer which will depend on himself and the force of education gained at school and on the farm. There are other means, however, by which the higher and middle classes in rural parishes may render material aid while the seeds of education are taking root. I have said *may* render aid, because all Englishmen resist compulsion; but I feel those words are hardly strong enough when applied to the objects to which I am about to refer. Public opinion will, in fact, *force* their adoption in all places where its influence can be felt.

I refer to four principal objects; First, to a more general substitution of good cottages for bad ones—cottages which will secure health and comfort in the ordinary living department, and provide separate bedrooms for the parents and children of different sexes, so as to secure comfort and decency, which have hitherto been incompatible with the dwellings of the farm labourer. These advantages may be gained not only by building new cottages, but by alterations of and

additions to existing ones. This was a great point with the late Lord Palmerston, who personally took as much interest in the comfort of the working men on his estates as he did in the conveniences of his own mansion. I had many opportunities of learning his views and of witnessing his practical philanthropy, and shall not forget the truth-telling homeliness with which he said that "it is not necessary to pull down old cottages to build new ones. A great deal can be done, at a moderate cost, in improving the old ones." His lordship added, after saying this, "That the effect of improving these dwellings is almost marvellous. In the first place, the comfort of a man's house depends on the tidiness of a man's wife, and on the mode in which she tries to make him comfortable. But there is a temper of the human mind which is denominated recklessness. When a thing seems impossible, it is given up in despair. When a cottage is in such a 'ramshackle' state that it is impossible for the wife to keep it clean, she becomes a slattern; everything goes to ruin; the man is disgusted, and flies to the beershop."

Second, the provision of a proper means of dealing with the drainage of villages and cottages, and the utilisation of the refuse which may be discharged from them. This is a matter upon which little has yet been done. We have drained large towns, and discharged their sewage into the rivers—a practice which the country has determined shall not be continued. At present we have not entered upon a mode of dealing with the sewage of villages and small communities; and whether it will be by the introduction of the dry-earth system (Mr. Moule's), or by any other process of utilisation, yet remains to be determined. The dry-earth system commends itself to the minds of many as the most suitable

for villages, because each resident may preserve the refuse of his cottage for the benefit of his own garden without injuriously affecting his neighbour; and this being a very desirable object, the problem has to be solved how, by combined action, all the residents of a village may be brought into one common system of proceeding. As the wage-paid labourer cannot of himself do this, it would appear positively necessary that the owners of village property should take the initiative.

Third, the supply of pure wholesome water in quantity sufficient to secure cleanliness and comfort to villages and cottages. I have already addressed the Society upon this important object,* and will abstain from repetition. The supply of water to large towns, like their drainage, is an easy matter compared to the provision of villages and small communities. But with our whole water supply undergoing change from causes we cannot control, and our village cottagers called upon to pay as much as a penny per pail for water, the subject must soon receive attention.

And, fourth, the provision of ground for the recreation of those children which it is determined by common consent should be educated.

I will now address myself to those objects in which the upper and middle classes of rural parishes may voluntarily assist the lower class. Foremost amongst them are benefit societies. Of all things which the labouring man most dreads is his condition in his last days. By subscription to local societies (if well managed) a labourer may, under the present state of things, contrive to obtain the means of support if sickness overtakes him while able to work, but a provision for old age and

* *Society of Arts Journal*, vol. xiv. p. 17.

total incapacity is an object which very few agricultural labourers secure. If the earnest interest of the upper classes in a parish could be manifested by taking a part in the management of benefit societies, very great good would attend them, and it would no longer be said that out of the 23,000 friendly societies which exist in England and Wales, there are not 20 solvent. By importing into the mode of management the agency of the post-office as a means of securing safety of deposit and of insuring allowances both in sickness and in old age, as has been proposed by the Rev. J. Y. Stratton, in some interesting articles written by him in *All the Year Round* (April, 1866), and in *The Cornhill Magazine* (February, 1864), the extension of such societies would follow. It was with a view to gain this advantage that the Kent Friendly Society memorialised the Postmaster-General last year, and I believe with good effect. All persons who have given their attention to the matter concur in objecting to the meetings of friendly societies at public-houses (see Appendix II.); and if the higher classes would really take an interest in them, the practice would be modified, if not discontinued. Sometimes," says Mr. Tidd Pratt, "the club is sold with the goodwill of the house." Beer-house clubs are indeed a great abomination.

Some few existing societies are excellent precedents for the establishment of others. The Essex Provident Society has enrolled between 9000 and 10,000 members, and has a capital of between 70,000*l.* and 80,000*l.*; and the Hampshire Friendly Society has upwards of 3000 members and a capital of 35,000*l.* The Hitchin Friendly Institution, established in 1828, is, perhaps, based on as good a foundation as any in the country, as every member who insures against sickness

is also compelled to insure for a pension in old age, an object declared by Mr. Hawkins, its founder and great supporter, to be of "vital importance if the wage-paid classes are to be taught the advantage of respectability in providing for themselves when past work without application to the parish."

The next object in which the higher classes can help the lower is in establishing and maintaining garden allotments under a provident system of management, by which a labourer, having allotted to him a rood of land, may pay, during his active life, a rent more than sufficient to satisfy the landowner, but which it is quite worth his while to pay, to secure the profit which the gardening of a rood of land will give. In the majority of cases a landowner who would not let a single rood of land to the labourer, would let a plot of many acres to the parish authorities, and would be quite satisfied in receiving for it a fair agricultural rent, say 2*l.* an acre, tithe free, which is equal to 3*d.* a pole or 10*s.* a rood. If the labourer paid 6*d.* a pole, or 1*l.* a rood, tithe and rate free, he would be paying double the acreage rent that would satisfy the landowner, and if the surplus was invested through the same agency as that of the "Post-office Benefit Societies," it would accumulate so as to provide the rent of the land after a certain number of years, whereby the labourer in his latter days would hold the land rent free. Thus he would ensure one means of support. But such an advantage can only be gained by the combination of the more wealthy parishioners, who together might become security to the landowner for the principal rent.

Again, village hospitals and infirmaries, enabling the labouring class who have lived a worthy life to gain proper medical advice and nursing at home, are working

well where properly managed, and are fit objects for benevolent co-operation. A very good illustration of what may be done in this way through the active interest of the kind-hearted and wealthy, is to be seen in the case of Cranleigh village hospital, to which the wife of a landowner lately high sheriff of Surrey acts both as secretary and treasurer.

But besides these there is still another object, in which the upper classes may do much good. We have recently heard much of co-operative societies for reducing the cost of provisions and preventing extortion on the part of London tradesmen. Without entering upon the question of whether such societies are desirable or beneficial for those they were originally intended to assist, it is quite certain that a modification of them may, with great advantage, be carried out in villages for the supply of food and clothing to the labouring population in rural districts. At present there has been very little experience in co-operative stores in villages.* There is no doubt, however, that the small wages of the agricultural labourer are much reduced by tribute to the local tradesmen; and with so little to spend as the labourer has, it is indeed desirable that that little should purchase as much as it can be made to do. One condition would be paramount, and that would be, that ready money should be the only means of purchase, but as this requirement would produce provident and careful habits, while the trust system leads to loss and suffering, it could not eventually militate against success.

Associated with co-operative stores there might be

* It must not be supposed from this that I am the advocate of co-operative farming, or of the "system of industrial partnership" applied to farming. The reader is referred to Appendix III. for a description of one of the most successful efforts of the sort applied to *trade*.

established common kitchens and bakeries,* in which food might be cooked with economy, and a better knowledge of cooking among labourers' wives acquired. (See Appendix IV.) Several efforts of this character are now being made in various parts of the country, but I am not in possession of sufficient information to speak of the results. If, in addition to district visiting, our young ladies would introduce the sewing machine into villages and take the initiative in the needle work of their poorer neighbours, the labourers' wives would gain knowledge in that department, and help at the same time.

Lately, too, penny readings have become fashionable during the winter in many villages, and the squire, the clergyman, the doctor, and the trader have vied with each other in laudable efforts to provide amusement for their neighbours; and, as instruction invariably accompanies mental amusement, much benefit is gained. Dickens, Thackeray, Marriott, Halliburton, and Douglas Jerrold, with occasionally a taste of Shakespeare, Tennyson, or Longfellow, are the favourite authors whose works are read. The subjects and scenes selected, however, are almost invariably beyond the appreciation of the agricultural labourer, who, though fond of native wit and homely habits, and perhaps able to enjoy the sayings and doings of Sam Weller and Jacob Faithful, are quite incapable of enjoying the satire of *Vanity Fair*, or Sam Slick, the pungent quizzing of Mr. and Mrs. Caudle, or the refinements of high-class

* Mr. J. K. Fowler remarks: "Mr. Denton had spoken of bakeries for the benefit of the men, but he did not see why they should not have public breweries as well, so as to avoid the bad beer so much complained of, only it would be quite necessary that the present oppressive malt-tax should be removed. The supply of water to the dwellings of the poor was of even greater consequence than that of beer, and should never be overlooked in the erection of cottages."

poetry. They are, therefore, excluded from these cheap evening gatherings. Why should this be? Is it not possible to have village readings on "Nature's common things," in which all classes can be amused and instructed? I venture to say that, if once an effort was made to render popular the philosophy of natural laws in every-day country objects, we should find the labourer desert the beer-shop for the reading-room. "Talpa" (Mr. Chandos Wren Hoskyns) has shown us how amusing "The Chronicles of a Clay Farm" may be made; and the profound Faraday, when he lectured on a farthing candle, proved that the science involved in one of the commonest objects of daily use could be made as excitingly interesting as the highest wrought sensational novel. I am satisfied that, if the educated gentry of the country would now and then extend their interest in the direction here indicated, by communicating information on any common object which they may thoroughly understand—it should, however, be a condition that the information should be fundamentally sound—they would not only instruct the uneducated of the village, but they would impart knowledge to their own class, which would be eagerly seized and reciprocated. Science would thus gain ground in rural districts in the most pleasing way, and we should not meet with the ignorance one daily encounters, when the horse-keeper emphatically assures you that his horses prefer to drink water from a pond receiving the drainage of the stable, or when the cowman asserts that his stock are all the better for living in a low-lofted, crowded shippon, in which there is hardly room to stand upright or space for all his cows to lie down at the same time; or when the ploughman tells you that clay soils are so stiff that water cannot

pass through them, while he himself is engaged in poaching the surface by ploughing it in wet weather, without seeing that it is his own act that upholds the water.

I trust I may be allowed to close my remarks with an acknowledgment of the assistance I have received from numerous correspondents; among them I may mention Mr. Lawson, of Northumberland; Mr. Briggs, of Yorkshire; Mr. Skelton, of Lincolnshire; Mr. George Jackson, of Cheshire; Mr. Charles Howard, of Beds; Mr. Squarey, of Wilts; Mr. Morris and Mr. Castree, of Gloucestershire; the Rev. Prebendary Brereton; Mr. Sturge, of Bristol; Mr. Fowler, of Bucks; Mr. Mechi; the Rev. J. Y. Stratton; Mr. Charles Whitehead, of Kent; Mr. Whitting, of Cambridgeshire; Mr. Hagger, of Liverpool; and Mr. James Webb, of Worcestershire.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX I.

At a conference of noblemen and gentlemen, of various shades of political opinion, which took place on Saturday, March 21st, at Willis's Rooms, to consider the present condition of the agricultural labourers of England, the following questions formed the basis of the discussions which took place: What are the causes of the unsatisfactory condition of the agricultural labourer? What are the best means calculated to improve that condition? If by the formation of a society, then upon what plan should such society be constituted, and what steps should be taken to form it? Canon Girdlestone advocated the formation of a public society, by the organised aid of which the labourers might be elevated to the position which they ought to hold. He wished the union or society simply to be a defensive and protective society. He wished to say that he strongly guarded himself against being the instigator of aggression by agricultural labourers either against their employers or their fellow-workmen, if the latter might not happen to accord in their particular views. What they sought for was free trade in labour, that every agricultural labourer should have the privilege of taking his labour to the market where he could best dispose of it, and that he should receive such a rate of wages as the character of his labour might command. He moved the following resolutions:

"1.—It is the opinion of this meeting that in many parts of the country the condition of the agricultural labourer, as regards wages, treatment, house room, and opportunities for acquiring information and manual skill, is such as demands serious and immediate attention.

"2.—That as one means of raising the agricultural labourer from his present depressed condition, it is desirable to encourage and assist the formation of agricultural labourers' district protection societies.

"3.—That these societies shall be in principle and operations strictly defensive, and carefully guarded against all possibility of aggression either on employers or fellow-workmen, and that their chief object shall be to secure a fair day's wages for a fair day's work, in proportion to skill, ability, and industry.

"4.—That the committee be at once appointed to manage the details to be employed in forming the above societies, and to direct and superintend the work, to draw up a code of rules, and to promote in all possible ways both the physical and moral improvement of the agricultural labourer.

"5.—That those interested in the improvement of the condition of the agricultural labourer be earnestly requested at once to provide a fund for the payment of the salaries of the organising agents, and all other expenses incurred in carrying out the proposed object."

Mr. Fawcett, M.P., moved a rider to the resolution, to the effect "That in the opinion of this conference the condition of agricultural labourers will continue to be depressed and unsatisfactory until their education is secured by compelling their children under thirteen years of age to attend school so many hours a week."

Mr. Fawcett's proposition was supported by the Marquis Townshend, who thought, however, some immediate means of ameliorating the condition of the agricultural labourers should be adopted.—A lengthened discussion ensued, in which Lord Northbrook, Mr. Read, M.P., Lord Lichfield, the Hon. A. Herbert, Mr. G. Potter, Mr. Lloyd Jones, and other speakers took part.—The resolutions were then passed with some verbal alterations, the most important of which was the substitution of "unions" for "societies" in the third and fourth.—The proceedings terminated with a vote of thanks to the chairman.

APPENDIX II.

The following graphic description of the Sharing Out Clubs is from the pen of the Rev. J. Y. Stratton:

"If such is the evil case of societies which are recognised and protected by the law, what shall be said of the 'Brummagens' or 'Sharing Out Clubs,' which are supposed greatly to outnumber the certified societies, and which, from the terms of their constitution, cannot have their rules certified to be in conformity with the law?

"In almost every parish one or more of these clubs (Sharing Out Clubs) will be found, the management of which is usually in the hands of the landlord of the public-house or beer-shop. The Sharing Out Club is formed on the principle that a half-penny a week from each member will secure a shilling a week for each sick member for a term, which (independently of all further calculation) is sometimes three, sometimes six months. When this term is expired a similar one commences, during which half the amount only is payable, which is in turn succeeded by superannuation pay, of which more anon. An extra levy is made in case of the death of a member, or member's wife, or child. All the members pay alike, and each one on joining the club makes a verbal declaration that he is in sound health and of good constitution, or states truly and plainly whether he is more than ordinarily liable to sickness or disease. If his statement is false, he runs his own risk, and on the discovery—which his continuance in the club would not fail to make—he is expelled, and forfeits all his contributions. The clever but unscrupulous device of the annual dissolution of the club deserves notice. This Phoenix of the taproom—the Benefit Society, so called—dies once a year, usually on the first Monday in May, and forthwith arises from its tobacco ashes with new plumage, destined for a speedy plucking. By means of its annual rejuvenescence, it contrives to free itself of old or burdensome members, who are left to the care of the poor-rate. The poor-rate is, in truth, the virtual superannuation pay of these clubs; and hence the device of the annual dissolution. When a member becomes so infirm as to render him a greater

burden than can be conveniently borne, he is reminded that outdoor relief at 2s. 6d. is a better thing than superannuation at 1s. 8d. The advantage of his leaving the club is obvious, and he goes, generally with a good grace, 'to relieve the club and better himself.' He oftentimes receives a donation from the 'sharing out' proceeds; but, whether he likes it or not, he will be passed over in the new list of members for the year ensuing.

"In the course of the last Session the Earl of Lichfield moved for a return of the number of paupers, in Union Workhouses in England and Wales, who had formerly been members of benefit societies. The return was obtained for the last week in August, when the numbers were reported to be 4015. By the kindness of Mr. Owen, of the Poor Law Board, we are enabled to state that the number of male paupers in the Workhouses at that time was 32,497; whence it appears that about 12 per cent. of such inmates were formerly in friendly societies. At first the proportion does not seem to be large; but when it is considered that the workhouse is the refuge of destitute infirm persons, whose constitutions, and also of the idle and vicious whose characters, would alike debar them from admittance to such societies, the percentage will be thought a high one. At the same time we believe that if returns were forthcoming of the number of outdoor paupers formerly in benefit societies, a much higher percentage would be the result. Of all these poor men, there is but too much reason to conclude that had the money wasted by them in insolvent or fraudulent clubs been properly applied, *they would at this moment have been in the receipt of a sufficient sum to raise them above pauperism*, unless in those cases of exceptional distress in which help, whether from poor-rate or parish charities, entails no moral degradation."

APPENDIX III.

The following statement explains the System of Industrial Partnership, adopted by Henry Briggs, Son, and Company, at the Whitwood and Methley Junction Collieries, near Normanton, Yorkshire, and is given here as it has been argued that a similar system of co-operation might be adopted in farming.

Until the 1st of July, 1865, the Whitwood and Methley Junction Collieries were worked as a private enterprise by the firm of Henry Briggs, Son, and Company. For several years previous to that date, the regular working of the collieries, and the legitimate profits derivable therefrom, had been most seriously interfered with by the occurrence of frequent and lengthened strikes among the workmen. These unhappy differences became at length so serious, that the proprietors determined to register their company under the Act of 1862, "with the primary view" (as was stated in a prospectus issued during the month of November, 1864) "of securing the co-operation of all connected with the collieries, either as managers and work-people, or as customers; in the earnest hope of thus effecting a satisfactory solution of the difficult problem, now so largely occupying the attention of political economists and philanthropists, namely, the best mode of associating capital and labour, and of preventing the occurrence of those trade disputes which so frequently disturb the social relations of our country."

After mentioning that the valuation of the property would not exceed the sum at which it stood in the books of the existing firm, it was further stated in the prospectus that the members of that firm would retain at least two-thirds of the share capital, and, "that in allotting the remaining one-third, they would give a decided preference to applications for shares—first, from the officials and operatives employed in the business; secondly, from the purchasers of the produce of the collieries." The amount of the shares was fixed at 15*l.*, with 10*l.* called up, and the most novel feature of the proposed undertaking was introduced by the following clause:

"In order, however, to associate capital and labour still more intimately, the founders of the company will recommend to the shareholders, that whenever the divisible profits accruing from the business shall (after the usual reservation for redemption of capital and other legitimate allowances) exceed 10 per cent. on the capital embarked, all those employed by the company, whether as managers or agents, at fixed salaries, or as work-people, shall receive one-half of such excess profit as a bonus, to be distributed amongst them in proportion to their respective earnings during the year in which such profits shall have accrued." It was added, that the acting partners of the existing firm would

retain the management of the business, each share carrying one vote; also, that facilities would be afforded to the workpeople for the gradual purchase of shares by weekly instalments.

Thus the scheme was inaugurated. When first proposed to the workmen they received it with enthusiasm, and everything seemed likely to proceed as well as could be wished. Soon, however, doubts began to arise in their minds, promoted in the first instance by the paid agents and lecturers of the miners' trades unions, who began to fear that if the co-operative company succeeded, strikes would cease, and their employment come to an end. Thus a large portion of the workmen put no faith in the good intentions of the founders of the company. There were, however, notable exceptions to this rule. From the very first, a small band of steady and thoughtful men (some of whom had been bitter opponents of their employers in previous disputes) rallied round them. Some of them paid up for shares at once, whilst others formed share-clubs, whereby each member, by payment of 1s. 3d. per week, could eventually become a shareholder.

In order to point out, in greater detail, the various methods whereby the miners might assist to insure the profitable working of the undertaking in which they were invited to co-operate, the managing partner of the firm issued an address to the workmen during the month of May, 1865, from which the following is extracted:

TO THE WORKMEN EMPLOYED AT WHITWOOD AND METHLEY
JUNCTION COLLIERIES.

It must be well known to all of you that the owners of the above-named collieries have recently come to the important decision of transferring them to a Limited Liability Company on the 1st of July next. This step is one which is important to *you* who are employed at the collieries, as well as to *us* who have provided the capital necessary to bring them into operation, because the principal object we have had in taking this step has been the enabling of *you all* to obtain a direct interest in the prosperity of the undertaking in which *we* as capitalists and *you* as workmen are engaged.

It has been a source of regret and some disappointment to us that notwithstanding our endeavour to place our plan before you in the clearest light, and to arrange the working of the company on principles the fairest and most advantageous to you as workmen, we have not been able to induce very many of you to take advantage of the great and unprecedented opportunity offered to you. This must have arisen in great measure from your having failed thoroughly to understand our proposal. I therefore now address to you some remarks on the subject, in such a form that each of you may at his leisure read over, study, and thoroughly understand the plan we have resolved to adopt.

As we have already stated in our prospectus, we intend to admit as shareholders in the company—first, any or all of those employed by us, and secondly, any or all of those who are accustomed to buy the produce of our collieries. In fact, we wish to adopt a principle of working so thoroughly co-operative, that if fully carried out the strikes and locks-out now so prevalent in all trades, and which all respectable workmen and kind-hearted employers must alike deplore, will be rendered impossible for the future. In order to do this, we not only allow our workmen to become shareholders in our undertaking on the same terms, in proportion to the relative amounts of capital, as ourselves, but we recommend that whenever the divisible profits of the business shall (after making due allowance for restoration of capital, and other legitimate purposes) exceed 10 per cent. upon the capital embarked, all those employed by the company, whether as managers, agents, or workmen, shall receive one-half of such excess of profits, as a percentage on the amount of their earnings during the year in which the profit shall have arisen. This proposal having been duly laid before a meeting of working shareholders held at Methley Junction on the 22nd of March, 1865, it was then agreed to try the plan for the year ending June 30th, 1866, upon the conditions laid down in the following rules. You will observe that it has with justice been considered as but fair that those workmen who have by taking shares joined in some degree in the risks of the undertaking, should receive some preference in the distribution of the hoped-for bonus over those who have not thought proper in any degree to identify themselves with the project.

RULES.

1. Each man or boy receiving weekly wages for day or contract work shall obtain from the colliery office, at his own cost, a book wherein shall be entered from his wage-notes, by a clerk appointed for the purpose, the amount of wages earned by him.

2. In case of two or more men or boys being paid together, and their joint wages entered in one note, such men or boys shall apportion the amount due to *each* before bringing the note to the office for entry of the amounts in their respective books.

3. Attendance will be given on alternate Saturdays, between the hours of one and four, at Whitwood and Methley Junction, at offices appointed for the purpose, at which time all men who wish to participate in any bonus that may be earned must bring their respective wage-notes and books to such offices for examination and entry not less frequently than once each calendar month.

4. Any man failing to bring his book and wage-notes to the above-named offices for more than four weeks from the date of any such notes, will not be entitled to have his earnings entered among the sums on which a bonus may become payable.

5. If during the twelve months ending on the 30th of June in each year that the co-operative system is continued the profits realised by the company prove sufficient to admit of the payment of a bonus to workers, such bonus will be paid as a percentage on the wages earned during the same period, but no person who may have earned wages paid weekly will be entitled to receive any part of such bonus unless his wage-book, entered in accordance with the rules 3 and 4, is left for examination at one of the above-named offices on or before the 15th of July in each year.

6. In distributing any bonus that may be divisible at the termination of any year, the directors of the company retain the power of forming a bonus reserve fund, and from time to time of varying the amount of such fund, for the purpose of equalising the amount of bonus payable, also of giving a preference bonus on their earnings to such workmen as may have paid up the sum of ten pounds on any share in the company. For the year ending June 30th, 1867, and until further notice, shareholders conforming to these rules will be entitled to receive one-

half larger proportion of any bonus that may be declared than similarly qualified non-shareholders.

7. Any man or boy who loses or destroys his wage-book will be liable to pay double price for any new book and for the re-entry thereof.

8. Any man or boy who is detected either directly or indirectly attempting to defraud the company by altering or otherwise tampering with any wage-note or wage-book, or misrepresenting the amount earned by himself or by any other workman, will forfeit all claim to any bonus on his earnings.

On the 1st of July, 1865, the new company commenced operations. During the following twelve months the working of the collieries was carried on uninterruptedly on the novel co-operative plan before specified. Fortunately, a prosperous state of trade prevailed, and this, aided by the increased care and attention of the workmen, and, above all, by the absence of strikes, enabled the directors to divide 12 per cent. for the year on the paid-up capital, among the shareholders, and to devote a sum of 1800*l.* (equal to 2 per cent. on the capital), to the formation of a workman's bonus fund; out of which was distributed, in accordance with the regulations then adopted, but since modified, a bonus of 10 per cent. on their year's earnings to working *shareholders* (of course in addition to the dividends on their shares), and a bonus of 5 per cent. on their year's earnings to working *non-shareholders*.*

This most satisfactory and practical result has of course removed many objections previously urged by the men. They have now the successful experience of the year gone by, to encourage them in the work of co-operation. Their employers can remind them of the day when, after receiving their regular wages, every holder of a bonus-book came into the pay-office, and numbers left it richer men than they had ever been before. Many had a five-pound note in their possession for the first time, and some few had two, the highest bonus being paid to a miner, who, being a shareholder, received on his year's earning of 100*l.* 8*s.* 9*d.* a bonus of 10 per cent., or 10*l.* 18*s.* 10*d.*

* April 4th, 1867.—According to the present scale of bonus, the distribution would have been 7½ per cent. to working shareholders, and 3 per cent. to working non-shareholders, upon the amount of their earnings.

It is also a very satisfactory feature of the case that the amount so distributed has been almost universally *well* spent; by some, in the purchase of shares in the company; by others, in paying an instalment towards the purchase of a plot of freehold land, whereon to build a cottage; while the purchases of articles of furniture, for domestic comforts, were very numerous.

In considering the applicability of the principle of industrial co-operation adopted by Messrs. Briggs to other undertakings, it is desirable to bear in mind that upwards of 60 per cent. of the cost of raising coal consists in wages paid for manual labour, chiefly performed under ground, and a further 12 or 15 per cent. in materials, any unnecessary waste of which can be prevented by care on the part of the miners. From this circumstance arises the greater applicability of the principle to mining enterprise than to any undertaking, the prosperity of which largely depends upon the commercial shrewdness of any one or two individuals.

The success of Messrs. Briggs's experiment in greatly improving the relations between themselves and their workmen, has been most striking. As has been before remarked, the year gone by has been free from any trade dispute, a larger quantity of coal has been worked, and a larger profit has been realised by the partners than during any previous year, whilst higher wages have been paid to the workmen. It may, therefore, reasonably be hoped that the bond of union between employers and employed will be so strengthened that it will bear the strain of the adverse times which, sooner or later, must be felt by every member of our commercial community. That proved, there remains but little doubt, but that the principle of industrial co-operation is destined to spread wherever, over the civilised world, man has to earn his living by the sweat of his brow.

P.S.—April 12th, 1867.—Since the above was written, there has been a large increase in the business of the company; the weekly sales having risen from about 6000 to near 8000 tons, and the weekly wages paid to about 1300*l.*; or, at the rate of 67,000*l.* per annum.

The interest shown by the workmen in the system of co-operation between themselves and their employers, and their appreciation of the advantages offered them, are constantly increasing.

Many of the colliers are also availing themselves of the assistance offered by the company, by means of loans to enable them to build cottages for themselves, on plots of freehold land, sold to them by the company at a low rate.

Mr. Briggs adds, in a note addressed to me in May, 1868: "At the end of the last financial year (June 30, 1867), there was a net profit of 16 per cent. upon the 90,000*l.* capital, 13 per cent. of which was distributed amongst the shareholders, and 3 per cent., or 2700*l.*, amongst the operatives, according to their earnings."

APPENDIX IV.

I extract from an admirable address of Mr. Clare Sewell Read, M.P., to some labourers of Norfolk, the following remarks: "I am one of those who know a kind Providence gives us food, but think, if the Evil One did not send cooks, he certainly has kept women singularly ignorant of one of the foremost of domestic duties. We hardly know how much of the happiness of a poor man depends on the preparation of his food. His capacity for labour, his health, and consequently his comfort and good temper, are mainly dependent upon it. Generally speaking, the economy of the farm-kitchen in cooking is much greater than that of the cottage. Therefore, all things being equal, if I were a young labourer, I should always make love, not to black eyes or blue, but to a good plain cook—though it might suit all the better if the plain cook were a nice-looking girl. I shall be told that there is plenty of materials in a farm-kitchen to make a good dinner; but it generally happens that the knowledge of how to make the *most of an abundance* will also furnish the best and readiest means to *make the best use of a little*. Knowledge of even the first principles of cooking is often entirely absent in a cottage; and plain fare, that might be made palatable and digestible by good management, is too often rendered distasteful and indigestible, and consequently the hard-earned wages of the husband are well-nigh wasted. You will laugh at my offering you a cooking receipt, but I happened many years since to give a few peas away in a severe winter for

making soup. On going into one cottage I tasted some that was decidedly nice, and in a neighbour's, the same sort of soup, that was essentially nasty. Now, the only difference, I was assured, was that the first was made from snow and the other from hard water. No doubt the virtues of soft water in making soup are well known to all cooks, but they may not be to every labourer's wife, and I would remark that I think we have strong prejudices against soups and broths, in which the Scotch so much excel, which may possibly arise from our inferior method of preparing them."

THE END.

On the AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS of the UNITED KINGDOM (REVISED
PAPER). By JAMES CAIRD, Esq.

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HAVING been invited by the Council to continue the subject of the agricultural statistics of the United Kingdom, on which I read a paper in March last year, I propose first to consider the result of the estimates then offered of the previous crop, the probable yield of the last crop (1868), and the great public advantage which followed the early announcement contained in the summary of the returns.

Estimate and Result of Crop, 1867.

It will be remembered that I then offered an estimate of the result of the bad wheat crop of 1867, in which, after making deductions for the diminished consumption likely to be caused by high prices, I computed the foreign supply required within the harvest year at 9,600,000 qrs. The actual receipts have been 9,609,006 qrs., between August, 1867, and August, 1868, the date at which the new crop was ready.

But the harvest was a very early one, and the condition of the corn so good that it was available for immediate use. The harvest year, as generally and properly understood, and within which it is very desirable that the statistical tables should be framed, is from

1st September to 1st September. Between these dates last year the total imports of wheat and flour were 9,293,000 qrs.

On either basis it will appear that my estimate was not very wide of the mark, though it was severely handled at the time, and figures were put forth to show that considerably less than two million quarters was all we could possibly receive between that time and harvest. The price, which had begun to droop, was thus again strengthened, and maintained during April, May, and part of June, when the final fall began, and steadily continued till the beginning of September, by which time the drop from the highest point had reached 20s. a quarter. But in the meantime the pressure on the poor, as was partly shown by the statistics of outdoor relief, was unnecessarily prolonged, while it was found that the foreign supply, which had been represented to have been exhausted by the enormous imports of the first six months of the harvest year, continued with very little diminution to its close. Instead of the 1,000,000 or 2,000,000 qrs., which was the utmost we were led to expect from all sources, we actually received 4,500,000 qrs. in the second half of the harvest year.

The economy in the use of bread caused by the high price of last year has proved very close to the estimate I ventured to put forth. It will, perhaps, be remembered that I assumed every 10 per cent. of additional price on the crop would diminish the consumption by 1 per cent.; and as bread had risen 50 per cent., I reckoned the saving at 5 per cent., or a little over 1,000,000 qrs. on the total consumption. The actual saving is shown by the following figures:—

	Qrs.	Qrs.
Average annual consumption since 1862, } inclusive of seed	—	20,800,000
Seed, 2½ bushels per acre	1,100,000	
Foreign wheat imported	9,300,000	
Home crop, 9,700,000 qrs. of 59 lb. quality, } equal to 61 lb. quality	9,380,000	
	—————	19,780,000
Saving by economy in the use of bread		<u>1,020,000</u>

This bears out the opinion of eminent statisticians, that the consumption of bread is very constant: that whatever the price may be, everything must be given up before bread—for the very severe pinch of an increase of price of fully one-half diminished the use of it by only one-twentieth.

Wheat Crop, 1868.

The bountiful harvest of 1868, and the splendid condition in which it was saved rendering it fit for immediate consumption, was

a great relief to the country after the pinching caused by two bad harvests and diminished trade. If there had been only the greater accessible produce to rely on much would have been gained; but a great deal more than that was revealed by the publication of a summary of the agricultural returns on 19th September. The beneficent season had added 2,000,000 qrs. to the produce of an average crop, while the increased acreage under wheat swelled that addition by 1,200,000 qrs. more. Nor was this all; for the fine and heavy sample will improve the yield and quality of the flour by 2 or 3 lbs. a bushel, or equal to one twenty-fifth part of the total produce.

The contrast between the yield of the two last harvests, 1867 and 1868, is shown in a very striking manner when all the figures are placed together.

Years.	Acres under Wheat.	Quality. Weight per Bushel.	Total Produce at 40 lbs. per Quarter.
1867 -----	3,640,000	5s. 59	9,280,000
'68 -----	3,951,000	6s. 63	16,480,000
Increase in 1868 -----	—	—	7,000,000

Here is a difference in a single year, exceeding four months', or one-third of the total consumption. The home crop will give us within 5,100,000 qrs. of our average consumption, and if we add to that one month in consequence of the unusually early harvest, and reckon on 13 months' consumption before the next harvest may be available, we shall need 6,800,000 qrs. of foreign wheat and flour. In the six months since 1st September last we have imported about two-thirds of that quantity, so that, even if imports should for the current six months materially decrease, we are likely to receive quite enough to carry us on with moderate prices till next harvest.

Price and Supply.

The price is a question of great delicacy, though of first importance. In the course of the year 1868 the highest average Gazette price was in May, 73s. 8d., and the lowest in December, 50s. 1d.; the difference 23s. 7d. There is thus a fall of one-third from the highest point, which corresponds in most remarkable exactness with the increased produce of 1868 over 1867. So far as our own crop is concerned, the consumer would thus appear to have got the full benefit of the good wheat harvest.

Till next harvest the price will very much depend on the rate of foreign imports. These come to us not so much in relation to price

in this country as to the productiveness of the harvest abroad. A scarcity here and high prices will draw the surplus corn from every quarter of the globe to us, but it will not cease to flow when the source of supply is abundant, however low the price may fall in this country. It is an axiom in political economy that no article can remain long below the cost of production. But that cost is very different in different countries. In this country the cost of producing wheat may be taken at the maximum. In other countries where rent, rates, or wages are greatly lower than ours, and especially where, as in Southern Russia and the valley of the Mississippi, there are likewise boundless tracts of most fertile soil, they can continue to produce wheat at prices which would entail loss on the grower in England. Moreover the vast machinery of production, once set in motion, will maintain its momentum for a considerable period after the stimulus has been withdrawn. Thus in 1860, in consequence of two deficient harvests, the price rose 10s. a quarter, and the imports increased one-third over those of 1859. They continued to swell in volume until 1863, the year of abundance, when the price fell 10s. a quarter. The imports did not then decline in the same proportion; indeed but for the disturbance of the American trade, caused by the war, there would have been no decline, and if we exclude America for that reason, and limit ourselves to Russia and Germany, which between them have furnished us with 40 per cent. of our imports since the Crimean War, I find that during 1863, 1864, and 1865, when the average price varied between 40s. and 44s., the imports continued at much the same rate as in the two preceding years, when the price was 55s.

A very productive harvest in France will exercise an immediate influence on prices in this country. Not only does her demand for foreign corn cease, but from the small average yield and the vast acreage under wheat a slight increase in the produce tells quickly up. Last year I computed an increase of one bushel on the acre in France at upwards of 2,000,000 qrs. If her increase has been in anything like the same ratio as ours, France will have a large surplus for export, probably quite enough to meet any decline caused by the deficient crop in Southern Russia.

Steady Decline in the Price of Wheat under Free Trade.

The effect of free trade in corn has been to lower the price of wheat in this country, notwithstanding the increase of the population and consequent increased consumption. The average price of the twenty years preceding 1848 was 57s. 4d., and of the twenty years of free trade, 52s. 3d. But if the disturbing influences of the cessation of supplies from Russia during the Crimean War, and from America during the later years and since the close of the

American War, be eliminated, the average price of the last twenty years would have stood 10s. lower than that of the twenty years preceding free trade.

This is a fact of great importance when we come to consider the increasing population of the country, and the means we have of meeting their annually growing demands upon our resources. The popular estimate of the wheat annually consumed by each person of the community in England used to be 8 bushels. In 1850 I ventured to question that opinion. My estimates then showed that it did not probably from our own soil exceed 5 bushels. Mr. Lawes has lately entered on an investigation of this subject, the first part of which he has embodied in a very able paper in the last number of the "Royal Agricultural Society's Journal." He divides the last sixteen years into two periods of eight years each, and the results of his estimates are embraced in the following summary:—

Estimated Consumption of Wheat per Head per Annum.

During the Last Sixteen Years.	England and Wales.	Scotland.	Great Britain.	Ireland.	United Kingdom.
	Bushel.	Bushel.	Bushel.	Bushel.	Bushel.
First eight years	5·9	4·2	5·7	2·7	5·1
Second "	6·3	4·2	6·0	3·2	5·5
Average of whole period	6·1	4·2	5·9	3·0	5·3

Converting these figures into pounds, it appears that during the first eight years each person consumed at the rate of 311 lbs. of wheat, and during the last period, 335 lbs. But the proportions in which that was afforded by foreign supply had also altered from 79 lbs. per head in the first, to 134 lbs. in the second. Here two very important results are shown; first, that the people are able to buy, and do consume more bread; and second, that we must depend wholly on foreign countries for the increased supply necessary to meet the growing consumption.

An immense impetus seems to have been given to consumption by the general increase of wages consequent on the Crimean war and the Indian mutiny, and the great exertions put forth by this country on these occasions. The foreign imports of wheat, which up to 1860 had not exceeded an annual average of 4,500,000 qrs., then rose to 10,000,000, and during the last eight years have maintained an annual average of 8,000,000 qrs.

Increasing Rate of Consumption likely to be Fully Supplied.

But we have not only to provide for an increased consumption by each individual, but for an annual increase of 240,000 in the

population. This, at $5\frac{1}{2}$ bushels per head, is 165,000 qrs. In ten years, at the same rate of progress, that will have swollen to nearly 2,000,000 qrs., and in ten years more to 4,000,000. This would indicate the need of a gradual rise in our foreign imports in ten years, from the present average of 8,000,000 qrs. a-year to 10,000,000, and in twenty years to 12,000,000 qrs. a-year. In one generation more, say thirty years hence, the imports will at this rate be more than the home growth, if that should remain at its present point. Our past experience of the readiness with which the volume of foreign wheat has increased with the demand would lead to the conclusion that we need entertain no apprehension on that score. California promises us next year more than 2,000,000 qrs. France alone, by a slight improvement in her husbandry, only so much as would raise her average yield from 15 to 18 bushels an acre, could meet our requirements. And when we consider the extent of rich countries within the wheat region farther east which are scarcely begun to be tapped by the railway system, we must feel that we are yet far from having reached the limit at which a moderate rate of price will bring us sufficient supplies. FOR WHEAT, WHICH FORMS THE GREAT STAPLE OF THE FOOD OF CIVILISED MAN OUTSIDE THE TROPICS, OCCUPIES OF ALL CEREALS THE WIDEST REGION SUITED TO ITS CULTIVATION.

The importance of this fact cannot be overrated. If the wheat region had been of small extent the increase of population would have been quickly limited to the food resources of each country. A continued development of mining and manufacturing enterprise in Great Britain would have been impossible. For nothing can be done without bread. Wheat is the common food, the real staff of life. The hardworking poor are far more dependent on and much larger individual consumers of it than the rich. If its price like that of most other commodities had risen, or was likely to rise, with the increasing demand, no political foresight, no more equable arrangement of the burden of taxation, no reduction even in public expenditure could have long availed us. But the wheat region has been designed apparently to be co-extensive with the progress of civilised man, and the more regular and extensive the demands upon it the more ready and continuous becomes the supply.

The natural tendency of the gradually falling price of wheat in this country since 1848, has been to diminish the breadth of our own wheat. And the force of that tendency, in spite of the great increase of gold, shows the steadiness of its operation. There has been a yearly increase of consumers, with an increased power and capacity to obtain bread, an increasing ratio in the supply of gold, the representative of its money value; and yet in spite of all that, the price has declined, and the average breadth of wheat grown in



PACIFIC OCEAN MAP



the United Kingdom has diminished. But the figures in the statistical returns show how quickly the price of wheat affects the home supply. The two fine crops of 1863 and 1864 reduced the average price to little more than 40s. But in 1867 the price had risen to 64s., and in one year there was an addition of 300,000 acres to our breadth of wheat.

I have already in a previous paper shown that the rate of increased productiveness of the land under wheat is very slow. From that source, therefore, there is little hope of any material increase in our home produce, in the face of larger foreign supplies at low prices. When the price of wheat falls below 50s., the farmer begins to turn his attention to other crops. The value of barley has been rising in nearly the same proportion as that of wheat has declined in recent years, and oats have also fully maintained their price. While the farmer in these, and in the increasing value of his live stock and its produce, will be able to compensate himself against the steady decline in the value of wheat, the people, that vast and increasing body of consumers, have the prospect of abundant supplies of bread at a moderate price, from the yearly extension of the means of foreign transport.

General Results.

Having thus endeavoured to discuss the main question answered by the agricultural returns, viz., in how far the home crop is available for the national supply of bread, I proceed to extract from the returns certain other points affecting our food and clothing. Beyond a slight increase in the breadth of potatoes, and a nearly similar decrease in barley, and the large increase of wheat already referred to, there has been no material change in the general crops of the country during the last two years. The table showing the percentage proportions of corn and green crop in each division of the United Kingdom is very interesting. In round numbers it appears that England supplies nine-tenths of all the home-grown wheat, Scotland and Ireland together only one-tenth. And the increased breadth, sown under the stimulus of the high prices of the past year in England, is equal to the whole acreage under wheat in Ireland. England produces more than three-fourths of all the barley grown in the British Islands, nearly all the beans and peas, and one-third of the oats. Ireland grows one-half more oats than Scotland, and two-thirds of the entire potato crop of the United Kingdom. The three kingdoms, as compared with France and Prussia, grew the following proportions of acres of corn to their respective populations:—

England	1 acre for every	2½ persons
Scotland	1	2½ "
Ireland	1	2½ "
France	1	1 person
Prussia	1	1 "

And of potatoes—

England	1 acre for every	62 persons
Scotland	1	20 "
France	1	12 "
Ireland	1	5 "
Prussia	1	5 "

.With regard to live stock, these countries stand in the following proportions :—

	Cattle.	Sheep.
England	1 for every 5 persons;	1 for every 1 of population
Scotland	1 " 3 "	2 " 1 "
Ireland	1 " 1½ "	1 " 1 "
France	1 " 2½ "	1 " 1 "
Prussia	1 " 3 "	1 " 1 "

Of all these countries Ireland has thus the largest proportion of cattle, and Scotland the largest of sheep.

Increase of Cattle and Sheep.

The entire loss sustained by the cattle plague up to October, 1867, when it had quite ceased, was 190,000 head. The natural increase in the two years since the disease began to decline exceeds 500,000, so that the effects of that calamity, so far as the national supply of food is concerned, have been fully recovered. The increase of sheep has been very rapid, the joint effect of high price of mutton, and the panic which in some counties followed the cattle plague, and led to a substitution of sheep. The total increase of the year has been 1,790,000. The sheep stock of the United Kingdom is upwards of 35,000,000, which is almost the same in number as that of the Australian Colonies and Tasmania, according to the latest returns. The total number of sheep in the United Kingdom and the whole of the British Colonies, independent of India, cannot now be much under 100,000,000. The import of continental wool is on the decline, while that of colonial is largely increasing. At the late rate of progress, our vast woollen industry in this country will ere long be sufficiently supplied by the home and colonial produce.

Whilst the increase of sheep at home has been rapid and great, there has been a very large decrease in the supply of foreign sheep. These, which in a single year, 1865, had risen from 496,000 to 914,000, began to decline in 1867, and fell back greatly in 1868.

This was caused in some measure by the restrictions imposed on the import of sheep by the Privy Council Ordinance, but was partly also due to the considerable fall in the price of mutton during 1868, arising from the large supply of sheep forced into the home market by the prospect of a dearth in the green crops. But the agricultural returns have revealed to us the gratifying fact, in relation to this important branch of the national food, that there is an immense elasticity in the production and supply of sheep, both at home and abroad, and that may be largely and quickly increased by a moderate rise in price.

Foreign Dairy Produce not Increasing.

The foreign supply of butter and cheese has continued very steady during the last eight years. It made a sudden rise in 1861, and had nearly doubled itself in 1862, but from that year the average supply has not materially altered. As the prices of these articles are still highly remunerative to the home producer, there is every inducement to him to develop yet farther that branch of agricultural industry, on which the small and middle-class farmers are chiefly engaged.

Large, Compared with Moderate Sized, Farms.

The returns afford some indication of the results of large corn farms as compared with the more mixed husbandry and interests of small or moderate-sized farms. I have taken ten of the largest farm counties in England, and compared them with ten of the smallest farm counties, the total area in both cases being nearly equal. The general results may be broadly summarised thus. The large farm system embraces nearly twice the proportion of corn, and half the proportion of green crops and grass. In other words, it is doubly dependent on the price of corn as compared with the middle-class farm system, which relies to a far greater extent on its dairy produce, its fat cattle, its vegetables, and its hay. The result is, that the latter pays more rent or surplus for the use of the land, and a higher rate of wages to the labourer.

There can be no doubt that circumstances of soil and position are the chief cause of the distinctive modes of husbandry which have continued to characterise different counties, notwithstanding the obvious change in the relative values of agricultural produce. The price of wheat is not higher now than it was one hundred years ago. Barley and oats have risen 50 per cent., and animal produce more than 100 per cent. in that time. And yet wheat maintains its prominence on the heavier soils where a bare fallow is still found the most perfect and economical preparation for that crop, and in the eastern, south midland, and southern counties,

where a dry climate and somewhat thin soil is less favourable to stock husbandry and grass. It is worthy of notice that in every one of the ten counties where the large farm system prevails the chalk formation predominates, and there is no coal; while in all the ten counties of the smaller farm system coal is present, and there is no chalk. The vicinity of coal has naturally influenced the increase of population, and the consequent higher rates of rent and wages.

Proportions under Bare Fallow.

The extent of land in England under bare fallow every year is nearly 800,000 acres, which is more than one-tenth of the whole breadth of corn. The proportion in Scotland is about a twentieth, and in Ireland less than the ninetieth part. In France and Prussia an extent equal to one-third of all the cereals is annually left to lie fallow. This undoubtedly indicates the great prevalence of a poor and low state of husbandry in these countries, due in a large degree also to the dryness of the spring and summer climates. But of the three kingdoms it is very remarkable that Ireland should stand so pre-eminently above the others in her comparative freedom from the direct loss occasioned by the necessity of leaving the land to lie fallow, which cannot be wholly accounted for by the comparatively small proportion of clay soils in that country.

Distinctive Features of Husbandry.

There is a much greater similarity than will be generally imagined in the agriculture of England and Scotland, and a distinctive principle of difference between them and Ireland in a very important point. This will be clearly seen by the proportions of the whole area of the three countries, exclusive of heath and mountain land, thus divided:—

England has in corn and potatoes 33 per cent., in green crops and grass 66 per cent.

Scotland has in corn and potatoes 33 per cent., in green crops and grass 66 per cent.

Ireland has in corn and potatoes 20 per cent., in green crops and grass 80 per cent.

The agriculture of England and Scotland seems thus alike in its principle of one-third exhaustive and two-thirds restorative crops, while that of Ireland has only one-fifth exhaustive to four-fifths restorative. I have included potatoes in the exhaustive crops, so that Ireland, which has by far the largest proportion in potatoes, suffers some disadvantage by this mode of comparison. But the result is very startling, as it places the agricultural system of Ireland, as an ameliorating and reproductive self-supporting system,

far above that of England and Scotland. To this I will return. But as some illustration of the effect of this exhaustive system of corn husbandry as compared with its proportion of the restorative green crops and grass, the following figures gathered from the returns are deserving of notice :—

	Percentage of Corn and Potatoes.	Percentage of Green Crops, Fallow, and Grass.	Average Fertility of Wheat per Acre.
England	33	66	28
Prussia	45	55	17
France	54	46	14

This would seem clearly to show that deterioration rapidly follows the loss of a due balance between the exhaustive and restorative crops, where there are no extraneous means of supplying the loss.

Poible Yield of France Explained.

The state of agriculture in France is of much importance to the consumer of bread in this country. In some recent years she has contributed one-third of our whole foreign supply of wheat, considerably more than the entire produce of Scotland and Ireland. A good crop in France, therefore, at once tells on our prices, whilst a failure brings her large population into competition with us in the general market of the world. She has a vast breadth annually under wheat, but the yield is very small. This has been attributed, and would appear partly due, to the poverty and want of skill of her small occupiers; and many arguments have been founded upon it against the small farm system and the minute subdivision of land. But it has often struck me in passing through that part of France which lies between us and Paris that the general cultivation of the land, and the appearance of the growing crops, was quite equal to our own, and the very low average rate of the yield of wheat officially stated seemed to me therefore unaccountable. The explanation has been afforded to me by the distinguished French economist, M. De Lavergne, in the following letter, dated 25th February last :—"The official returns give a mean yield of 14½ hectolitres per hectare, the actual yield being more above than below the estimate. "Eight departments, Le Nord, l'Oise, l'Aisne, Somme, Seine-et-Oise, Seine-et-Marne, Seine, and Eure-et-Laire, have a yield equal "to the English average; but the forty-five departments which "form the southern part of the territory, do not yield more than "10 hectolitres to the hectare. This feeble yield is caused in "many of the departments by bad cultivation, and in the south by

“the dryness of the climate in spring. The statistical returns also show 5,148,000 hectares of fallow, which is in fact the third of the surface sown with cereals.” There is no help for that part of the country which suffers from great dryness of spring climate, but there would seem much room for improvement in the yield of wheat over the remainder, which comprises probably more than one-half of the surface of France. As increasing importers and consumers we are nearly as much interested in that improvement as the French people themselves. The state of agriculture must be low, indeed, where it is possible to be carried on with an average produce of 10 to 12 bushels of wheat an acre. The costs and profits of cultivation must be at the very minimum to yield any surplus for rent, and the condition of the cultivator must be a hard one. He has other sources, no doubt, which may help him—his vines and oil—but in the nature of things it is impossible that he can get any profit from his wheat crop, until by such a change of system as will increase its yield. Towards this object the French Government have for some years been unremitting in their attention, by contributing largely from the public resources to improve the internal communication of the country and facilitate the interchange of products. The increase of a few bushels an acre over so large a surface as one-half of the wheat crop in France, would give her a regular surplus for exportation.

Irish Agriculture.

It was my intention to have instituted a comparison between the large farm system of England, and the small farm system of Ireland, and I had prepared detailed statements of groups of counties in the two countries for the purpose; but there are too many elements of estimate or conjecture to warrant their publication as a statistical deduction. If we confine our attention to Ireland alone, some remarkable anomalies present themselves. The province with the highest valuation—Leinster at 20s. an acre—has the smallest population on the square mile of land under the plough; while Connaught, with a valuation of 6s. 8d. an acre—the lowest of the four provinces, has the largest population in proportion to its arable land. The poorest part of the country is thus also the most populous. But that does not seem to arise from an excess of small farms, for Leinster has a larger proportion of holdings under five acres than Connaught.

No Recent Reduction in Small Holdings.

A great reduction took place in the number of small holdings in Ireland during the years of the potato famine, 1845 to 1850, but since 1850 there has been very little alteration. The comparison

one constantly meets with is between the years 1841 and 1861, the small farms being stated to have fallen in that time one-half in number, and the larger sized increased in an equal ratio. But that has not been progressive. It had all taken place before 1841, and there has been no marked change in this direction during the last eighteen years. In 1867 the number of holdings was 607,000, divided thus:—307,000 farmers holding farms of 15 acres and under, and 300,000 farmers of 15 acres and upwards. *But the first-class, or small farmers, hold not more than one-eighth of the cultivated land,—the second-class, or larger farmers, holding seven-eighths of the whole.*

We have already seen that the counties in England where the system of moderate-sized farms prevail have the smallest proportion of corn, and the highest of cattle and of dairy stock. They have a greater rainfall, a deeper soil, and are more productive of grass and green crops. Now, if we exclude from consideration for a moment the 307,000 small farmers, that is exactly the state of Ireland. Her climate and soil are very favourable to green crops and grass and to dairy farming, and she has the further great advantage, which I have already shown, of having the smallest proportion of such land as it is necessary to lay fallow; and her system shows the largest proportion in the three kingdoms of restorative to exhaustive crops. Her only disadvantage as an agricultural country is the occasional visitation of seasons of too much rain. That has several times imperilled the wheat crop. But the wheat crop is less than one-tenth of the cereals of Ireland, and her agriculture is but little dependent upon it. Oats are her chief reliance as a corn crop, and from flax she derives an annual return of between two and three millions sterling—an article which may be said to be now unknown to the agriculture of England and Scotland. If we sum all up, we find that, as compared with the sister kingdoms, Ireland has on the whole a more productive soil, and her produce is chiefly of that kind which in the last twenty years has risen most in value. I am very much disposed to think that the seven-eighths of Ireland, which are in the hands of the larger farmers, yield as great a produce per cultivated acre as the average of England and Scotland. I am not in a position to submit this to any accurate test of proof, but this is the impression left on my mind as the result of a careful investigation of the question.

Distress mainly Confined to One-eighth of Land in Hands of Smallest Occupiers.

But the position of the 307,000 small farmers who occupy the remaining eighth of Ireland is probably very different. It is among that body that real distress is found, though the class of larger

farmers, not much separated from them, have helped to swell the general complaint. Experience has shown that it is only in climates and upon soils the most favourable that an entire dependence for his subsistence can be placed by the cultivator of a few acres of land. Even in Belgium, where circumstances are favourable, the small cultivator has but a hard lot of poverty and toil. He thrives where, in addition to his land, himself and his family find regular employment in some other industry. It is the same with the English peasant. A man who has regular employment at wages finds an immense advantage in a good garden allotment beside his cottage, and that is vastly increased when that cottage is on the farm, away from the temptation of the beer-shop, and where, as part of his wages, he receives the keep of a cow. This is the system in the border counties, where agriculture is in the most prosperous state, and the agricultural labourer the best fed and clothed, the most educated and intelligent of his class in any part of the three kingdoms. But the Irish farmer of a few acres of inferior land must be in a position of chronic distress. The witnesses most favourable to him examined before Mr. Maguire's Committee in 1865, held that 15 to 20 acres and upwards was the least extent on which a man with his family could be expected to thrive. On land of good quality, and near a large population, a much smaller extent might no doubt be found sufficient. But taking the land of Ireland as it is, and the circumstances of the country, and its mode of agriculture, there is a general consent of the most competent judges in that country, that farms below 15 or 20 acres are too small to afford a due return for the entire labour of a man and his family. It would therefore follow that 130,000 of the small farmers, with their families, are as many as the remaining eighth of the surface of Ireland can profitably maintain as farmers, and that there will then remain a surplus of 170,000 and their families. These figures represent the whole number of holdings; but several holdings are believed to be in many cases in the hands of one farmer, and the total number of occupiers is therefore reckoned by Lord Dufferin not to exceed 441,000. If that be so, the surplus to be otherwise provided for will not exceed 100,000.

That seems no impossible achievement. A wise measure for settling the long agitated question of the tenure of land will give a great impetus to improved agriculture, and the consequent demand for labour will rapidly absorb that surplus. It is, after all, little more than one additional family for every 160 acres of cultivated land. I have no doubt that the Legislature which shall pass the great measure of pacification for Ireland, which is now under its consideration, will in due time complete the work by a just land law, which will give greater security to the employment of capital

in the cultivation of the land, and call into action that surplus labour, without which its latent fertility cannot be fully developed.

The English Agricultural Labourer.

But, though the state of the Irish peasant has been more forced upon public attention, the condition of the agricultural labourer in England is very far from satisfactory. The agricultural returns afford no guide to its consideration. He is now the only class of the community who has no representative. The Irish peasant has, directly in many cases, by his vote as a small farmer, and indirectly through his church, which (connected neither with the landlord nor the State) brings the aggregate feeling of the people to bear upon their Parliamentary representatives. By one means or another they do make themselves heard in Parliament. But so little is known of the English agricultural labourer, that when his actual condition is set forth in the report of a Royal Commission, the public are struck with astonishment, and even the landowners are surprised to find a state of things at their doors which many of them little suspected. The condition of the labourers' dwellings is in some counties deplorable. It is not my province, however, on this occasion to enter further on that subject. I attempted to introduce a clause in the last Census Act, in 1860, which would have thrown much light on the state of our cottage accommodation, but it was rejected in the English Bill. It was adopted, however, in the Scotch census, and has shown that one-third of the population of Scotland lived, each family, in houses of one room only, another third in houses of two rooms; two-thirds of the whole of the people being thus found to be lodged in a manner incompatible with comfort and decency as now understood. The same returns in the next census will show the progress that has been made in the 10 years; and the public advantage of this will, I trust, lead to the adoption of a similar system in the next English census.

In the same year I moved for returns of the wages of agricultural labourers in England and Wales, which was subsequently followed for Scotland and Ireland. Upon these returns Mr. Purdy read to this Society an able and interesting paper in 1861. These form very important branches of the statistics of agriculture, and though it is not necessary that they should be included in the annual returns, I trust their importance will not be overlooked in the preparation of the next Census Act.

Great Change in proportion of the People Dependent on Agriculture.

It has been found in Ireland, and is the case to a less extent in some parts of England, that it is not so much the low rate of wages

as the irregularity of employment which depresses the condition of the agricultural labourers. That is mitigated by emigration from the agricultural to the mining and manufacturing districts, or to foreign countries. Mere farming will not take up profitably the natural increase of population in a thickly-peopled country like ours, and the purely agricultural districts in each of the three countries are constantly parting with their surplus. The proportion between the producers and consumers of food is thus undergoing a marked change. In 1831, 28 per cent. of the population of England and Wales was occupied in the business of agriculture. In 1841 it was 22 per cent. It 1851 it had fallen to 16 per cent., not so much from an actual decrease of the numbers employed in agriculture as from the far greater proportional increase of trade. In 1861 the proportion was 10 per cent., and then not only had the proportion diminished, but the actual numbers had decreased by nearly one-fifth. It is a very remarkable fact that in the course of a single generation the proportion of the people of England employed in and dependent on agriculture had diminished from a third to a tenth. The only means of arresting this is by providing better-paid and more regular employment in country work, and thus diminishing the temptation of the higher wages of the mines, the factory, and the towns.

Home Grown Sugar.

Last year I touched on this subject, and mentioned the intention of trying the beetroot sugar growth and manufacture in this country. The experiment was made in Suffolk, and with so much promise of success, that in the same locality this season a sufficient breadth of beet will be planted to keep an extensive sugar factory in full work for the four slack months from October to February. The matter, then, will be beyond experiment, for if it proves, as is anticipated, the suitability of our climate and soil to the profitable production of sugar-beet, it will be the dawn of a new agricultural industry, which may rapidly be developed, to the great benefit both of England and Ireland. The possible magnitude of the result will be readily appreciated by the fact that in this country the consumption of sugar is equal to nearly one-third of all the sugar annually produced in the tropics and on the continent, and that any disturbance which would seriously alter the state of property or labour in Cuba, must give an immense stimulus to the demand for beetroot sugar. And the reduction of price which will follow the "free breakfast table" promised to us by Mr. Bright, as one of the early results of economy in our public expenditure, will rapidly augment that demand.

In a national point of view the introduction of a new manu-

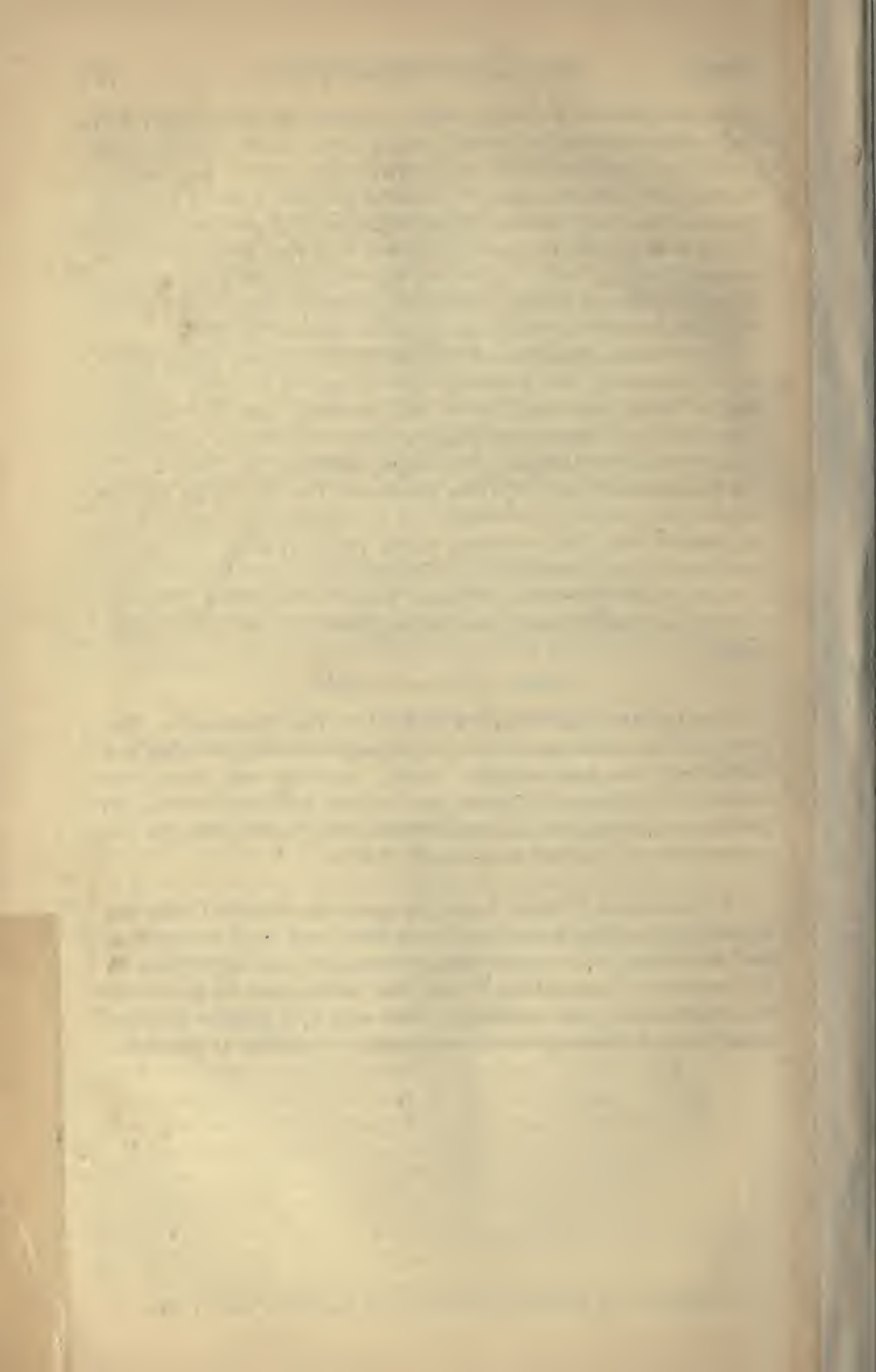
facture connected with agriculture, such as beetroet sugar, will both enlarge the field of remunerative labour in the country, and provide an absolute addition to agricultural produce and wealth. For the pulp after the sugar is extracted has lost little of its value as cattle food, and therefore the substitution of sugar-beet for some of the present cattle crops will displace to a very small extent the means of feeding cattle. And even that will soon be made good by the more generous farming which the profits of sugar growing will enable the farmer to practise on the other crops of his farm.

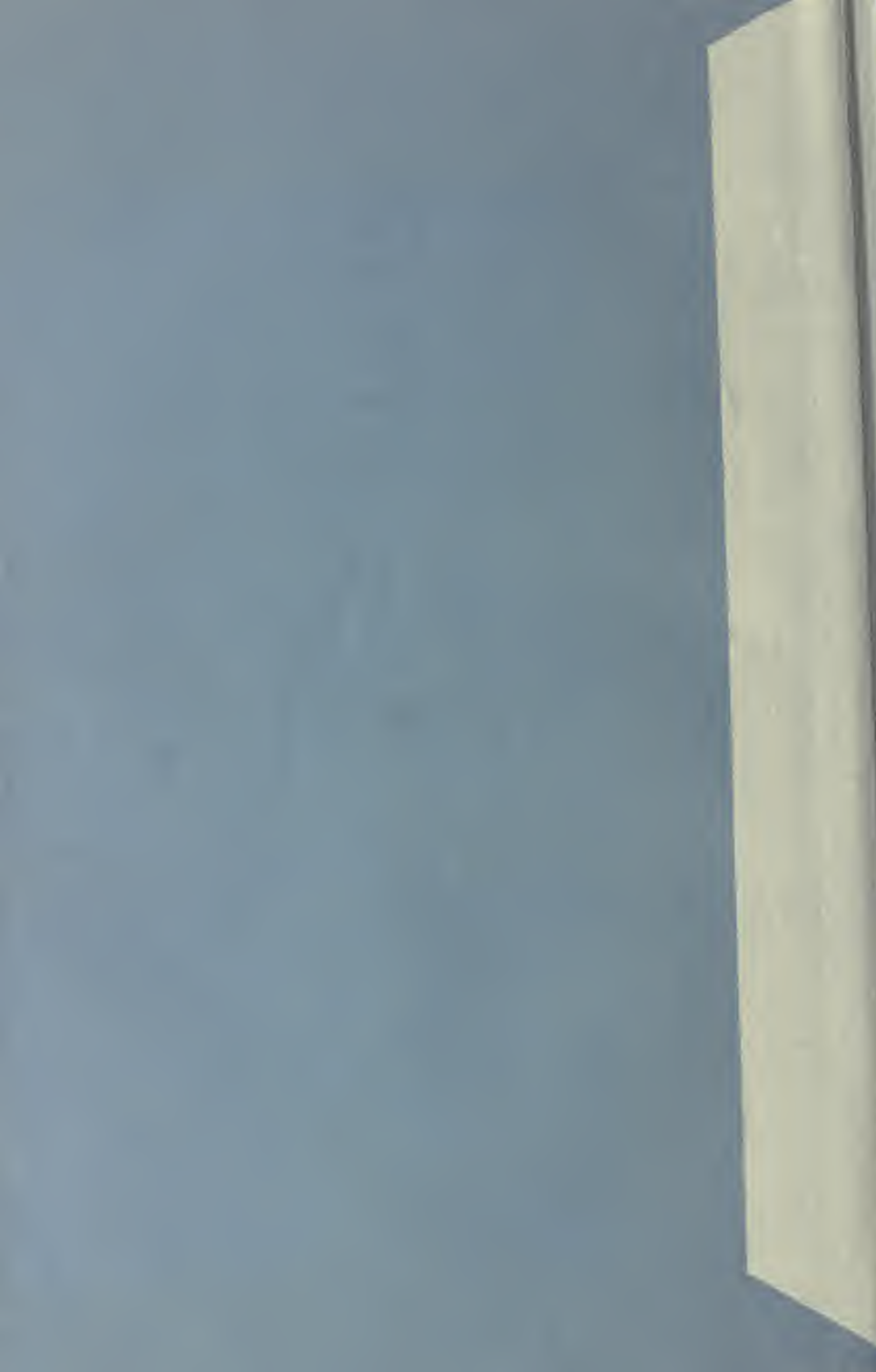
I have here a specimen of the first English-grown sugar, not a mere experiment, but produced as a matter of business. I find, from a French paper sent to me this morning, that the northern departments of France now produce about 200,000 tons of sugar a year, or nearly two-thirds of the sugar consumed in France. We use twice as much sugar in this country as the French do, and its consumption is always increasing. At a reduction of price equal to the present duty that increase would rapidly extend. I may be over sanguine on the subject, but I should not be greatly surprised if in ten years hence many thousand acres in the United Kingdom should be profitably employed in the production of home-grown sugar.

Return of Horses Desirable.

The last topic on which I will touch is one of omission. The returns of live stock do not include horses, the most interesting, and individually the most valuable of all. As every man knows the number of his horses, the return can be given without occasioning a particle of trouble, and I hope therefore that the schedule for the present year will include a column for horses.

In conclusion, I think it will be generally admitted that the agricultural returns have proved most useful and most instructive, and considering the ever increasing demands of our population on the resources of agriculture, I trust that nothing will be permitted to interfere with their continuance, and with that greater development which further experience may render it desirable to introduce.





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Denton, John Bailey
The agricultural labourer

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