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FOR SPEAKERS,
WRITERS,
AGENTS, ETC.

J. L. GREEN, F.S.S.

AGRICULTURE AND TARIFF REFORM:

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BY

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PREFACE.

It is submitted that, in the following pages, material will be found showing that our free-imports system—erroneously called Free Trade—has proved injurious rather than beneficial to agriculture.

It would appear that there are those who hold the opinion that so long as the urban trades and manufactures flourish all is well. That is the conclusion deducible from the arguments of "free importers." Pounds, shillings, and pence are the test of the nation's soundness with them. The time, however, appears to have arrived when even the urban traders and manufacturers feel seriously the pinch of a fiscal policy which agriculturists of all shades of political opinion have felt, and condemned, for many a long year.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude, that with the rural and the urban elements—with the agricultural and the manufacturing elements—joining forces, something may be done to alter

a state of things which, it is submitted, ought not to have been allowed to exist for so long. The agricultural predictions of Mr. Cobden in 1843-1846 have everywhere been falsified by the results. Mainly on the strength of these, agriculturists were led to adopt the fiscal policy he urged upon them—a policy which is proving increasingly injurious to the agricultural and other industries of the kingdom.

The Imperial aspect of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals has not been touched upon in the following pages; though looked at from this standpoint—which, in fact, embraces every other—there are those (the writer included) who are inexpressibly surprised that such proposals have not everywhere been accepted with alacrity—indeed, "jumped at," instead of its being necessary to "argue" their value and importance.

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AGRICULTURE AND TARIFF REFORM.

CHAPTER I.

AN ENQUIRY.

DEPRESSION, PRICES, COMPETITION, LABOUR.

WE think it will not be doubted by anyone who has travelled much in rural England, or who has otherwise taken the trouble to make careful enquiry into the condition of the agricultural industry, that not only is such industry seriously depressed, and has been for many years, but that the chief cause of the depression is the lowness of prices received for the various productions of the cultivator. For our own part we can say that we have, during the last twenty years or more, been in every county in England on more than one occasion, and in the majority of them on several occasions; that we have come across all classes of cultivators; and that we have never yet met with one who has not maintained that the depression in agriculture is mainly due to the cause we have indicated. A visit to the "market ordinary" or to those farmers who

either there or in the market put in an appearance, will, if conversation be indulged in, soon make it plain that although there are many things which may be done either by the State or by private initiative to help farmers to, in colloquial language, keep their heads above water, yet none of these will, unless some scheme such as that which Mr. Chamberlain has propounded be also adopted, make for any substantial or permanent improvement in the position of the British farmer.

And here let us say that although, in our opinion, the British agriculturist may quite legitimately claim at the hands of the State exceptional and favourable treatment in the conduct of his business, we urge the adoption of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals, not merely because they will benefit agriculture, but because, and as a consequence, they will greatly benefit the nation at large. We have always claimed, and we still claim, that whatever benefits agriculture or tends to make it more prosperous must be of special advantage to the nation from the point of view of public health, social order, and, what we regard as of minor importance, of public or private finance. Such a claim cannot be substantiated on behalf of a town manufacturing industry, for, although such industry may prove more financially prosperous, for the time being, at any rate, to those engaged in it—and even to the nation—it lacks to no small extent—as experience all over the world

more and more shows—the other elements of public health and social order to which we have referred—elements absolutely necessary to the continuance in sound condition of any State.

The lowness of prices to which we have alluded has not been temporary; and the fact makes the claim for tariff reform the more important. The last Royal Commission on Agriculture, moreover, declared there was a consensus of opinion amongst the witnesses before it that the depression in prices was "progressive"; indeed, so unanimous was the testimony from nearly all parts of the country, that the Commission considered it unnecessary in its report to go at length into the statements of the individual witnesses. We may, however, add that the views expressed by these themselves were emphasised by the evidence gathered by the various assistant Commissioners who travelled the country and who made independent enquiries on behalf of the Commission.

But *what* has been the actual depression in the prices of agricultural produce? Sir Robert Giffen states that between 1874 and 1891 the fall in the annual value amounted on the average to 77 millions sterling, or 25 per cent., and it is, of course, common knowledge that there has since that period been a still further serious decline.

Grain.

The average price of wheat, for example, was higher in 1891 than in the previous

seven years, or in any year since. Mr. Turnbull, a careful statistician, also estimates that the reduction in the gross annual revenue from agriculture comparing the years 1874-75 with the years 1892-93, was some 82 millions sterling, or 33 3-5 per cent. After careful enquiries, practical cultivators declared before the Commission that the average value in the price of all kinds of farm products had declined 30 to 40 per cent. at least.

No doubt, the depression has been largely due to the low price of grain; and it is no wonder that such an excellent authority as the late Sir J. B. Lawes was of opinion that unless prices in some direction became better arable land would still further go down to grass. Since he made that declaration arable land, as a matter of fact, has gone down still further to grass. But what have been the prices for grain? Without giving a lengthy table, we may state that whereas the triennal average price of wheat from 1876 to 1878 was 49s. 9d. per quarter, it came down to 31s. 9d. per quarter in 1886 to 1888, whilst in 1903 the average price of that cereal was only 26s. 9d. per quarter. As regards barley, the prices on the same three occasions were respectively 38s. 4d., 26s. 7d., and 22s. 8d. per quarter. In regard to oats the prices were 25s. 6d., 17s. 4d., and 17s. 2d.

It is very important in this connection to bear in mind that whilst in 1903 the average value of the home-grown wheat was, as already stated,

only 26s. 9d. a quarter, the average value of the imported article was officially declared to be as follows in the same year, viz., 28s. 6d. a quarter in the case of wheat coming to us from Argentina; 30s. from Chili; Roumania, 28s. 10d.; Russia, 29s.; United States, 30s. 1d.; and Germany, 29s. 2d. It would appear, therefore, that our farmers were forced to sell their wheat at a much lower price in our markets than was the foreigner; and it is certain, we think, that competition which has that result must benefit the foreigner rather than our own growers, who have so much more to bear in the way of rates, taxes, and cost of production.

Meat.

The fall in the prices of grain has also been accompanied by a fall in the price of meat. The evidence before the Commission of numerous witnesses was to the effect that in the case of beef the fall was from 30 to 40 per cent., whilst, if we examine the statistics which are available to anybody who chooses to seek them, we shall see that such examination bears out the statement in question. For instance, the triennial average price of first-class quality and inferior quality cattle per stone of 8 lb. was, in 1876 to 1878, 6s. and 4s. 5d., respectively. In 1886 to 1888 it was 4s. 9d. to 2s. 10d., whilst in the latest figures at hand, viz., for 1903, relating to the Metropolitan Cattle Market, it is 4s. 7d. and

2s. 10d., respectively. These prices show the diminution ranged up to 40 per cent. in price if we put the figures of 1876 to 1878 as representing 100 in each case.

Store and Fat Cattle.

Store cattle, like beef, have also declined, for whereas in 1882, for example, good store cattle realised £16 a head, they only realised £13 a head ten years later, and the reduction, which has been even lower since, was by no means confined to one district of the country, but was quite general.

Sheep, too, in spite of fluctuations, showed, both as regards fat and store stock, a steady depreciation up to the time of the report of the Royal Commission; since which period the evidence all goes to show that prices have not improved. Up to 1894, however, there had been a very marked decline, which varied from 21 to 33 per cent., according to the class of sheep sold. Turning to the official records of the Metropolitan Cattle Market, we find that first quality sheep, per stone of 8 lb., realised on the triennial average, 1876 to 1878, 6s. 11d., whilst in 1893 to 1895 this price had descended to 5s. 9d., and in 1903 it was 5s. 10d.; second quality and inferior quality making in the first triennal period 6s. 5d. and 5s. 5d. respectively, and in the second triennial period 5s. 1d. and 3s. 9d. respectively; whilst in 1903 the figures were 5s. 1d. and 3s. 8d.

In the case of pork, neither the agricultural

returns nor the ordinary official records give statistics as to the prices of the British production, but we find the Royal Commission stating that there is reason to believe that the prices of British pork have also decreased. In our opinion, they have decreased very considerably, judging from various enquiries we have made.

Wool.

Turning to wool, this used to be a very important item with the British farmer, but there is not a producer of it in the kingdom who would hesitate to declare that the price has gone down 30 to 50 per cent. during the last twenty to thirty years. The wool of black-faced ewes in the sixties and seventies used to realise in the North of England some 11d. per lb. on the average, but since that period it has gone down to 6d.; and this statement is also confirmed by Scotch producers. Welsh wool, which thirty years ago realised 1s. per lb., is now usually to be obtained around 6d. to 8d. per lb. In the West of England—Devonshire—wool which realised 1s. to 1s. 1d. per lb. twenty to thirty years ago, has fallen to from 6½d. to about 7d. per lb. Lincoln wool, some of the best in the kingdom, which thirty years ago realised from 1s. 5d. to 1s. 9d. per lb., according to quality, now realises about 9d. per lb. on the average. Southdown wool has also declined in value from 40 to 50 per cent. in the same period.

Dairy Produce, Etc.

If we are asked, "What about our home dairy produce?" we reply that here, too, prices have enormously fallen. Sir Robert Giffen, in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture, showed that the changes between 1874 and 1891 in the prices of milk, butter, and cheese, as a whole, amounted to a fall of 33 per cent., whilst other witnesses before the Commission estimated the reduction at from 25 to 30 per cent. There has been a very considerable fall since that period. With regard to milk, in districts within easy access of a large town, the reduction in price has been, according to the Commission, and as one would certainly expect, less marked than in the more remote country districts, where the article has to be sold in the manufactured form of butter and cheese in competition with similar products imported from abroad. Butter, unless of the highest quality, for which there is but a limited demand at the price of a high-quality article, has decreased from 15 to 20 per cent. in price, whilst as to cheese, this has fallen from 25 to 30 per cent. Moreover, it is the general opinion amongst those best qualified to know, that the price of potatoes has decreased quite 20 per cent. in the last thirty years or so, whilst everyone is aware that hops, a very precarious crop, do not realise anything like the figures of years ago.

We agree with the Royal Commission referred to, which was composed of members of both

political parties, that one of the gravest features of the depression which has been so manifest in the course of the prices of agricultural products has been its persistency.

Foreign Competition.

How far did foreign competition affect the fall in prices? In our opinion it has been, and still is, as already suggested, the main cause of such fall.

Look at the importation of cereals, which has been as follows:—

Years.	Wheat and Wheat Flour.	Barley.	Oats.
	Cwts.	Cwts.	Cwts.
1875–77 ...	58,314,000	11,261,000	12,186,000
1885–89 ...	79,856,000	17,619,000	16,408 000
1893–95 ...	99,257,000	25,902,000	14,821,000
1903 ...	108,731,820	26,548,078	16,281,910

We have, in the case of wheat and wheat flour, nearly doubled our imports in the period indicated, whilst the figures are still increasing. During the period 1875-77 to 1893-95, whilst the augmentation in the importation of the foreign wheat was accompanied by a diminution in the value of that article to the extent of 50 per cent., such fall was not equal to that which occurred

in the price of the British wheat during the same period, as the following figures show:—

Years.	Average Price of British Wheat per qr. of 480 lb.	Average Price of Imported Wheat per qr. of 480 lb.
1875–77 ...	49s. 4d.	47s. 11d.
1893–95 ...	24s. 1d.	24s. 9d.

At least 70 per cent. of the total supply of wheat in this country comes from abroad, and it is a significant fact that one of the characteristic features of our wheat supply has been the progressive displacement of the home-grown article by the imported article, a process which the Royal Commission declared was concurrent with the fall in the price of wheat in our markets and with a persistent shrinkage of the area under that crop in the United Kingdom. Moreover, it is worth noting that whilst in England, according to all the best authorities, it costs from £7 to £8 to produce an acre of wheat, the cost in America, according to a report issued by our Foreign Office a few years ago, shows that it varies there from, at the lowest, £1 per quarter, up to, at the highest, £4 4s. It may be asked:—"How can a British farmer, saddled not merely with the cost of growing his wheat, but with ever-increasing local and Imperial charges (to which, by the by, the foreigner using our markets is not subject), be said to

compete on fair terms with the American or other producer? And how long will the public consider this a right state of things?"

With regard to barley, it would appear that while there has been, until quite recent years, relatively little or no expansion in the supply of foreign barley, one important change which has been in progress has been the diversion of the import abroad towards those centres of production whence the cheaper varieties of barley are now obtained, a notable instance being the rise in the imports from Russia and the decline of those from the countries of Western Europe. In connection with this change, there has, no doubt, been a growing demand for low-priced foreign barley by stock-feeders, but it is difficult to account in this way for the apparent displacement of the dearer against the imported malting barleys, and the facts would appear to point to a material change having taken place in the nature of the materials used in the brewing industry.*

Regarding oats, the imports have undoubtedly increased from, say, thirty years ago, but the proportion of foreign oats relatively to the total supply available for consumption in the United Kingdom has not been so seriously felt as in the case of either barley or wheat.

Concerning meat, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that with the enormous importa-

* Royal Commission on Agriculture.

tions into this country the reduced prices which have prevailed must have been in part brought about by such competition and such importations, although we are willing to admit that the competition has been severest in the second quality rather than in the first quality of British meat. At the same time, the competition does exist, and in a severe form; and foreign meat, too, is sold in this country as British, and realises the price of British of the best class! There is plenty of evidence in proof of this; indeed, we think nobody with any pretence to experience in connection with the matter will deny it. As to the importations of meat referred to, we may say that we imported no less than 876,787 cattle and sheep, and 17,498,130 cwts. of dead meat in 1903, as against 712,691 head of cattle and sheep, and 16,971,022 cwts. of dead meat in 1902; whilst the inquisitive will find these figures to exceed enormously those for the corresponding classes of imports in earlier years.

In connection with foreign competition in dairy produce, the Royal Commission suggested that such competition was successful mainly because the dairy industry abroad is better organised than in Great Britain. It is true that there is better organisation abroad; but that fact does not, of itself, account for the British farmer not being successful in his competition with the foreigner. The facts are:—(1) The British farmer cannot make cheese or butter to sell at the prices which the foreign articles realise;

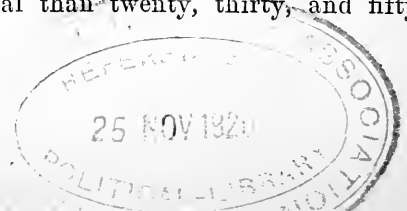
and (2), that even if he could, it would not pay him so well as it does now to sell the milk instead of to convert it into cheese or butter. This is speaking generally, although we admit that there is a limited room for more British butter and cheese of the "best" class. That, however, only touches the fringe of the great industry of agriculture; and organisation for that particular purpose will not much improve matters. The farmer might, perhaps, combine to sell his milk at a higher price, but that, of course, is another matter, and the public would be the first to complain of his "organised monopoly" in a necessary article of food. In regard to milk-selling, the British farmer at the present time makes practically no complaint, except on the score of the railway rates being too high.

As to wool, the importations of this raw material have increased enormously, namely, from 384,614,000 lb. per annum in 1875-77, to 599,509,732 lb. in 1903. A good part of the imports, it may be admitted, is again exported. Most of the wool comes from our Australian Colonies, and even though, as is the fact, the greater quantity of the wool received from such Colonies is merino—a variety which only indirectly affects the value of British and Irish wools—yet, in consequence of the diminished proportion of the production of the United Kingdom to the whole supply, there has been, and is, a displacement of the latter by the increasing

imports, and, accordingly, it is evident that the presence of so large a quantity of wool grown abroad in our markets is a factor of some importance in the determination of the demand for and the value of the home product. The price, indeed, of the home-grown wool has corresponded generally with the movement in the values of imported wools.

Increase in Cost of Labour.

The Royal Commission on Agriculture found, from the facts submitted to them in respect of 77 farms within recent years, that 31.4 per cent. of the total expenditure, or £1 5s. 5d. per acre, was for labour; and there can be no doubt whatever that the item which gives the farmer most concern, week in and week out all the year round, is how to rake in the money to pay his men, to say nothing of the difficulty in many districts of getting an adequate supply of labour at all. It is not necessary to ask if the labourer receives his fair proportion of the proceeds from, or produce of, the land. What is necessary to know is that such share on the whole is, fortunately, greater than it used to be, but that the farmer has not been able to increase his receipts in proportion to, whilst the landlord, except in favoured dairy-farming districts, is receiving a much less rental than twenty, thirty, and fifty years ago.



CHAPTER II.

AN ENQUIRY (Continued).

FACTS AND FIGURES FOR SPEAKERS AND WRITERS.

THE enquirer, whether tariff reformer or anti-tariff reformer, will, we venture to say, find the statistics and facts in the present chapter of interest, and we trust of value. They have not been "selected" to suit the side of tariff reform, but have been taken from official and other reliable sources after exceedingly careful research; and if it happen—as is the case—that they constitute a solid mass of material telling practically all in one direction, we must blame the facts—if blame at all—rather than the writer of this work, who has simply found them by such research as that referred to.

RURAL DEPOPULATION.

The number of labourers, farmers, &c., in England and Wales occupied in agriculture was, according to the official Census figures, as follows:—

In 1851	1,904,687
,, 1861	1,803,049
,, 1871	1,423,854
,, 1881	1,199,827
,, 1891	1.099,572
,, 1901	988,340

It needs no argument to prove to any individual possessing ordinary common-sense, and who, at the same time, has some acquaintance with town and country life, what a serious state of things the figures referred to indicate.

Bankruptcies.

The Board of Trade returns from 1885 (the first year for which official figures are available), show that in the list of Receiving Orders made in bankruptcy farmers have always been in point of total number of failures nearly at the top of the list. The actual figures are as follows;—

Year.	No. of Failures.	Position on List.	Year.	No. of Failures.	Position on List.
1885	206	Second	1894	200	Fourth
1886	332	Second	1895	313	Third
1887	295	Third	1896	260	Second
1888	282	Third	1897	247	Fourth
1889	247	Fourth	1898	191	Fifth
1890	172	Fourth	1899	151	Fourth
1891	187	Fourth	1900	179	Fourth
1892	236	Third	1901	167	Fourth
1893	282	Fourth	1902	189	Fourth

The foregoing table alone indicates pretty clearly how seriously distressed agriculturists have been.

Physique.

Although it is true that a large proportion of our agricultural labourers year after year drift to the towns to "improve" their position, we find that instead of the physique of the urban labour-

ing man becoming improved, it is, judged by the recent Departmental Committee's report, exceedingly unsatisfactory, although the sanitary or mortality statistics show in their general aspect an improvement over years ago.

When we dive below or fully into these we get at startling facts.

Thus it happens that, to take for example a town like York, we have 28 per cent. of the population (according to Mr. Rowntree), and 30 per cent. of the population of London (according to Mr. Charles Booth), living in poverty; whilst the Director-General of the Army Medical Service, in writing on recruiting in his report to the War Office, dated 2nd April, 1903, quotes Sir Frederick Maurice as stating that 60 out of every 100 of the men offering themselves for enlistment in the army are rejected as "physically unfit."

It is alarming to be told that most of these men are "labourers, husbandmen," and the like. Who has benefited by the agricultural labourers going to the towns? Clearly not and certainly not agriculture; and it looks as though the nation in this respect is storing up for itself a rich harvest of disappointment.

Pauperism.

The question of pauperism must always appeal to the agricultural social reformer. The figures below apply not only to the rural districts, but also to the urban districts. They relate to England and Wales.

We find that in 1854 there were 864,617 paupers in England and Wales.

The average for the five years...	...	1855–59	showed there were	894,822
,, ,, ,,	...	1880–84	,, ,,	787,118
,, ,, ,,	...	1885–89	,, ,,	788,357
,, ,, ,,	...	1890–94	,, ,,	765,282
,, ,, ,,	...	1895–99	,, ,,	814,749

In 1854 the cost for poor law relief was £5,282,853.

				£
The average cost for the five years	...	1855–59	was	5,846,054
,, ,, ,,	...	1880–84	,,	8,211,092
,, ,, ,,	...	1885–89	,,	8,354,379
,, ,, ,,	...	1890–94	,,	8,963,272
,, ,, ,,	...	1895–99	,,	10,526,003

The figures show:—

(1) That the cost of pauperism has nearly doubled (but not the population); and

(2) That the actual number of paupers is very much the same as in 1854, the tendency moreover at the last five-yearly period being to increase. This is in spite of the serious fact that the number of charitable agencies is now infinitely greater than in 1854. If these were not in existence there is every reason to suppose that the number of paupers now would be hugely more than before 1854, or before our free imports system was adopted.

Cost of Living Abroad, Etc.

A good deal of misrepresentation in regard to the above point is made by those who oppose Tariff Reform. We have seen it said that if Tariff Reform is adopted, black bread, horseflesh, goose fat, and other curious articles will have to be

consumed by the British working-man. Of course all such statements are made without reference to the facts, because not one of these articles of food is necessarily consumed by the foreign working-man, or by anybody else; and, from conversations we have had with foreigners in our own country, we can only say that they have expressed surprise that any Englishmen should be so gullible as to believe the stories on this matter which have been repeatedly told to them.

As an ounce of fact is worth a ton of fiction we need only further add that our own visits to France, Holland, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, do not bear out the statements of opponents as above referred to; whilst on the other hand we find by reference to the official Blue-Book, that the cost of food is such as to entirely disprove the assertions of anti-tariff reformers.

We have, therefore, extracted the figures, and we give them in the table below:—

Year.	Food and Cost.					
1901.	Beef, per lb.	Mutton, per lb.	Pork, per lb.	Eggs, per doz.	Milk, per qt.	Butter, per lb.
	d. d.	d. d.	d. d.	d.	d. d.	s. d.
England	$8\frac{1}{4}$ to $9\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{1}{6}$ to $7\frac{3}{4}$	$8\frac{1}{4}$	$11\frac{3}{4}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4	1 $2\frac{1}{2}$
Germany	7 to $7\frac{3}{5}$	$5\frac{1}{6}$ to $8\frac{1}{6}$	$6\frac{3}{4}$ to $7\frac{1}{2}$	$9\frac{1}{6}$	$2\frac{1}{6}$	$10\frac{1}{3}$ to $1/0\frac{1}{2}$
France...	$6\frac{1}{4}$	$7\frac{3}{4}$	$6\frac{3}{4}$			
U. States	$6\frac{1}{3}$		$6\frac{1}{6}$	$10\frac{3}{4}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$1/4\frac{1}{4}$

The price of bread in England (London) is officially stated to be 5d. per 4 lb. loaf, and it

varies from 4d. to 6½d. in Continental countries. It would appear that on the whole the foreigner is rather better off than we, as his meat (beef, mutton, pork,) is much cheaper than ours, and his bread just about the same. The lowest price in England for mutton (namely 5⅙d. per lb.) is due to the fact that we get so much from our Colonies, with whom tariff reformers wish to increase our trade.

Live Stock.

I.—*In Great Britain.*

In 1869, the first year official figures were available, there were 38,243,127 head of live stock on agricultural holdings in Great Britain.

In 1903 this number was only 36,568,103 head, or a reduction of 1,675,024.

If agriculture had been as prosperous as in other countries, the head of live stock in our case would have increased just as our total population has enormously increased.

II.—*United Kingdom and Abroad.*

The following table shows approximately the value of the live stock in the countries indicated in the years named:—

Years.			
1830	1850	1897	
Millions Sterling.			Country.
84	104	202	United Kingdom.
96	166	232	France.
88	138	303	Germany.
80	120	161	Austria.
16	17	26	Denmark.
30	36	93	Italy.

Permanent Pasture.

In 1866 (the first year official figures were available), there were in Great Britain only 11,148,814 acres of permanent pasture.

In 1903 there were 16,934,495 acres of permanent pasture.

The figures mean that in less than 40 years over 100,000 adult able-bodied labourers have had to seek employment in the towns; or (with only three children in each family) that 500,000 people have left the land in less than 40 years. If we go back to Cobden's time, the number (from 1851 to 1901—the last Census) comes up to the enormous total of 916,347 persons.

Bread and Meat Imports: an Important Point.

The Alleged Cheapness.

The adoption of the free-imports system in 1846 did not, and could not, have immediately lowered the price of wheat and flour and cheapened the price of bread. In proof of this it is only necessary to give the following tables of figures, which are official and accurate.

The first table gives (*a*) the actual price of wheat in the year before the Corn Law was repealed; (*b*) the average price for the six years 1845 to 1850 (inclusive); and (*c*) the average price for the six years 1850 to 1855 (inclusive):—

Years.	Prices.
(*a*) 1845	50s. 10d. per quarter.
(*b*) 6 years, 1845 to 1850 ...	51s. 8½d. ,,
(*c*) 6 years, 1850 to 1855 ...	53s. 3½d. ,,

The second table shows the actual quantities of wheat and of wheat flour imported into our country in the years indicated:—

Year.	Quantity of Wheat and Wheat Flour Imported.
In 1846	3,344 quarters.
,, 1847	4,464 ,,
,, 1848	3,082 ,,
,, 1849	4,835 ,,
,, 1850	4,830 ,,
,, 1851	5,330 ,,
,, 1852	4,164 ,,
,, 1853	6,235 ,,
,, 1854	4,473 ,,
,, 1855	3,207 ,,

The same argument applies to cattle, the importations of which did not seriously increase until 1853, when, owing to the dreadful cattle disease, pleuro-pneumonia—which lasted for five years and did enormous destruction amongst British stock—our own farmers were unable to meet the home demand for meat. The figures are:—

Year.	No. of Cattle Imported.
In 1846	45,043
,, 1847	75,717
,, 1848	62,738
,, 1849	53,449
,, 1850	66,462
,, 1851	86,520
,, 1852	93,061
,, 1853	125,253
,, 1854	114,200
,, 1855	97,400

Bread and meat, therefore, not only did not, but could not have become, through our foreign imports, immediately cheaper in price after the adoption of Cobden's proposals for the free importation of foreign corn and meat. Cheap food is, in point of fact, like cheap clothing, cheap iron, cheap clocks, or cheap anything else; that is to say, it is a question of supply and demand, aided, as they all have been, by discoveries in science and art, which have enabled the goods to be produced at a cheaper rate, and brought by sea and land at a cheaper rate, too. In spite of free imports, however, there are 916,347 less labourers, farmers, &c., engaged in agricultural pursuits than in 1851.

Wheat.

I.—*Wheat Acreage.*

The following figures are very significant. They are official:—

Whereas in 1866, the first year for which official figures are available, there were 3,350,394 acres in wheat, there were, in 1903, only 1,497,254 acres; or a decrease in 37 years of 1,853,140 acres.

II.—*Wheat Yield per Acre, Here and Abroad.*

It cannot be said that the British farmer's ability to grow wheat is not equal to that of foreign farmers; because the average product per acre on British soil and in other countries works out as follows:—

The United Kingdom, 33 bushels per acre;

France, 20;
Germany, 18;
Russia, 12;
Austria, 16;
Hungary, 12;
Italy, 12;
Sweden, 20;
Norway, 25;
Denmark, 25;
Holland, 23;
Belgium, 24;
The United States, 24; and
Australia, 10.

III.—*Wheat Yield per Inhabitant, Here and Abroad.*

The yield of wheat per inhabitant in various countries is as follows:—

Great Britain, 7 bushels;
Germany, 13;
France, 19;
Russia, 20;
United States, 24.

IV.—*Wheat Prices in England.*

The following table shows the average price of wheat per quarter between the dates named:—

	s.	d.	
1820—29	59	10	per quarter.
1830—39	56	9	,,
1840—49	55	11	,,
1850—59	53	4	,,
1860—69	41	7	,,
1870—79	51	4	,,
1880—89	37	0	,,

	s.	d.	
1890—99	28	9	per quarter.
1902	28	1	,,
1903	26	9	,,

It would appear from the foregoing that the price of wheat per quarter did not seriously lower until 1880 to 1889; or, 30 to 40 years after the Corn Laws were repealed.

V.—*Wheat Prices, Here and Abroad.*

The following figures are interesting, showing the average wheat prices per ton in different countries:—

(1) In 1869: London, £11 8s.; Paris, £10 18s.; Berlin, £10; Vienna, £8 6s.; and America, £10 8s.

(2) In 1879: London, £11 10s.; Paris, £11 12s.; Berlin, £9 12s.; Vienna, £8 8s.; and America, £9 6s.

In 1897 the price in America (United States) was only £6 9s.; whilst an average, taken a few years later, over 16 years showed that the prices were: In London, £11 11s.; Paris, £11 18s.; and Berlin, £10 8s. The figures appear to show that in countries with a tariff, and where the farmers are prosperous, the wheat actually sells for less than it does with us. More corn is of course grown, and it can be produced and profitably sold at less than we can at present produce and sell it.

VI.—*Wheat Duties, Here and Abroad, and their Effects.*

There seems to be a good deal of misunderstanding regarding the effects on the public at

large of the wheat duties abroad. Taking France and Germany, the two countries which most closely resemble our own agricultural and industrial conditions, we find:—

(1) That in the United Kingdom wheat did not seriously lower in price till 30 to 40 years after the free imports system was established;

(2) That wheat in France—where the import duty since 1894 has been 12s. 2½d. per quarter—has been much lower than when the duty was, as in previous years, from 7d. to 8s. 9½d. per quarter; and

(3) That wheat in Germany with an import duty of 7s. 7½d. per quarter ever since 1892 is lower than when in previous years the duty was from 1s. 2d. to 6s. 6½d. per quarter.

The argument from these facts would appear to be that it is not so much a duty of a few shillings a quarter which regulates the price, as the law of supply and demand, assisted by steamships, railways, and other inventions.

HOME AND FOREIGN PRODUCTION OF GRAIN.

The production of grain (wheat, &c.) in the United Kingdom, was as follows:—

	Millions of bushels.
1831—40	468
1851—60	390
1874—84	334
1887	311
1892—95	301

On the other hand, the production of grain in foreign countries has gone on constantly increasing. Moreover, not only has the grain produced

in the United Kingdom gone on decreasing and in other countries increasing, but whilst in the United Kingdom the number of bushels per inhabitant in 1831-40 stood at 16, it has now diminished to about 7 to 8, whilst in the other countries whose populations, like our own, have considerably increased, the number of bushels of grain per inhabitant has increased, a fact which is very remarkable.

If we turn to the cereal, wheat, we find an equally remarkable state of things. For instance, according to Mulhall, production in the United Kingdom has been as follows:—

	Millions of bushels.
1831—40	120
1851—60	121
1871—80	85
1881—87	78
1888	76
1894	58

since which time the acreage devoted to wheat has greatly diminished in the United Kingdom.

Nevertheless, France has increased her yield from 190 to 340 millions of bushels from the first to the last dates just named; Germany, 50 to 117; Russia, 110 to 300; Austria, 65 to 180; Italy, 60 to 117; Spain, 58 to 100; the United States, 78 to 454; Canada 6 to 33; and Australia 2 to 40.

Consumption of Grain and Meat.

In the United Kingdom, compared with the population of the country, we produce at the present time 7 to 8 bushels of grain per inhabitant, whereas in 1876 we produced 11 bushels per

inhabitant; in 1846, 15 bushels per inhabitant; and in 1830, 17 bushels per inhabitant.

On the other hand, the consumption of wheat, which in 1811 to 1830 was 300 lb. per inhabitant, has only increased for the ten years ending 1889 to 384 lb. per inhabitant; and these figures include not only the amount actually eaten, but the amount used as seed, which latter may be taken at 12 lb. per inhabitant at the date last given. If, to this statement it be added that our population has gone on increasing since the last date; that our production of home-grown grain has diminished, both in acreage and in price; and that the production of the foreign grain imported here has both increased in acreage and in its price to our consumers (which are facts), we cannot consider the position as healthy, whether as regards agriculture alone, or as regards the nation at large.

The consumption of meat may be taken as follows for the years specified *:—

1831—41	...	...	80 lb. per inhabitant.
1851—60	...	...	81 ,, ,,
1861—70	...	...	87 ,, ,,
1871—80	...	...	87 ,, ,,
1881—87	....	...	93 ,, ,,
1895	...	...	109 ,, ,,

It would appear that of our total meat consumption, we depend upon the foreigner for at least five months of each year; and yet there is no country better situated than Great Britain for the production of the best class of meat if more encouragement were given to our farmers and less to those of other lands.

* Mulhall.

Value of all Agricultural Products.

Another fact of interest is that whereas in 1812 the total value of the agricultural and pastoral products of the United Kingdom is placed at 260 millions sterling by Colquhoun, and in 1820 at 250 millions sterling by Spackman, the value, as taken out by Mr. Mulhall in 1889 was practically the same as at the latter period, namely, 251 millions sterling. Again, Mr. Caird (afterwards Sir James Caird) estimated the value in 1878 at 260 millions; and Mulhall, in 1895, estimated the value at 230 millions.

These figures, at the best, go to show that whilst the total value of the products of our farming have been more or less the same during a period of 83 years, the character of the farming has been enormously altered from arable to pastoral, and the rural population has, at the same time, enormously decreased.

Milling.

There is not a county in England but in which it used to be common to find "the miller and his merry men."

To-day, however, scores and scores of mills in every county have been closed, owing to the fact that there is no work for the men or for the masters, who formerly had the carrying on of the local industry of milling.

Less than forty years since nearly the whole flour used in this country was manufactured from the wheat by the British miller, and at the same period we were also exporters; but nowadays, in

spite of the fact that the population of the towns has grown enormously, and therefore consumes more flour, the British miller manufactures much less than what we now use, and he is still fast going down the hill in this respect.

The following figures will make this clear:—

	British-milled Flour. cwts.	Foreign Flour. cwts.
1871	61,940,000	3,977,000
1901	69,021,000	22,576,000
1902	78,555,000	19,386,000

It will be observed that in 1902 we milled in this country a much larger quantity of flour than in 1901; whilst, at the same time, considerably less foreign flour came into our country. The reason for the two facts is that in 1902 there was a small duty on foreign flour, which flour is, of course, a manufactured article. That duty has, unfortunately as we think, been since taken off; but, whilst it was on, the foreigner sent us less flour and more wheat. As a consequence, we ground the wheat into flour and employed British labour to do it, whilst the working-man, in his turn, set the shopkeepers and others going by the money which came in this way to his pocket.

Rentals, and Value of Land.

It is sometimes said that the rents in England are higher than they ought to be. Whether this is so is quite a matter of opinion, but the important point to remember is that, whereas in 1843 the rental value of land was £40,170,000,

it was, in 1888, only £44,470,000, which would scarcely go to show that landlords had been continually increasing the rents of their lands. As a matter of fact, except in the case of good dairying land, or land near a town, owners have largely reduced their rents, even from the year 1888, as to which much evidence was given before the Royal Commission on Agriculture; which showed that rents had been reduced generally from 10 to 30 per cent. in the least distressed districts, to 50 and 80 per cent. in the worst districts.

It will perhaps be interesting if we mention that the largest owners, that is to say, those owning estates of over 500 acres each, let their land at the lowest rent per acre, and that the next largest owners, that is to say, those owning estates from 100 to 500 acres each, come next in point of rent they charge for their land; whilst the two remaining classes of owners, namely, those owning estates from 50 to 100 acres, and those owning estates of under 50 acres, come next to those already mentioned in point of rent charged. As a matter of fact, of the four classes of owners, the average rent charged per acre works out in the first case at 36s. per acre, in the second at 40s., in the third at 48s., and in the fourth at £5 16s. per acre. It is common knowledge that the owners of very small properties, such as those last referred to, are not "land owners" in the sense in which the term is commonly understood, as the land is either attached to a dwelling, and accordingly possesses a higher value than ordinary agricultural land, or it is more or less accommodation

or market gardening ground, which always realises more rent than average-sized farms of, say, 200 to 400 or 500 acres.

Concerning the value, however, of agricultural land, the following figures are even better than those supplied by official Government publications, and they have the merit of referring to a county —Lincolnshire—which is pre-eminently agricultural. They were published in the "Nottingham Daily Guardian," on June 25th, 1904, in an article headed "The Value of Land in Lincolnshire." The writer says:—

"A farm of 315 acres was recently submitted to auction, and although it cost the vendor not less than £15,000, the highest offer was £4,000, a decrease in value of nearly three-fourths. At Aisthorpe, too, only a year or two ago, an estate of 890 acres came into the market, and the highest bid was £25,000. The owner (Mr. Ealand) gave for it more than double the sum. Decreases of 50 per cent. are common. A well-known Lincoln gentleman has an estate at Caenby, for which he gave over £50,000. He also spent about £10,000 in improvements, but it is a well-known fact that he would accept £30,000 for it now, if anyone would but make an offer. Ald. Bowling 25 years ago bought a farm in Dunston Fen at £20 an acre, but the same land two years ago passed to the posession of Mr. Webster, of Martin, at £35 an acre—and this included the inventory! There was a striking case, too, only a few weeks ago at Northorpe, near Gainsborough. About 1820 Mr. Coupland purchased a farm there for

£21,000, and this was knocked down at about £10,000. In May, 1901, an estate of 628 acres of arable and pasture land at Thorganby was purchased for £22,270, and when it was valued for probate in May, 1904, the value was returned at only £8,830. Another case is reported from Blankney Dales. A house and buildings and several closes containing 103 a. 3 r. 23 p. in June, 1828, fetched £6,120, and £5,000 was advanced upon it on mortgage. On April 6th this year, however, it sold at £2,800.

"In all parts of the district the same lamentable state of affairs prevails. A farm at Binbrook, containing about 134 acres, was purchased in 1881 for £6,000. In October, 1901, it was resold for exactly half the sum. The small landowners are also suffering in like degree, for a farm of 34 acres at Moortown bought about 1860 for £1,650, recently sold for only £500; 79 acres of land at Barlings, which cost £5,500, only realised £2,100; and 64 acres at Middle Rasen, costing £3,200 or £3,300, fetched £1,500. A similar figure to this was all that could be obtained for another at North and South Somercotes, which was bought in October, 1872, for £3,800. Two closes of arable land at Middle Rasen, purchased in 1875 for £505, sold two months ago at £300; and a small holding at Basingham, for which £1,050 was given in May, 1880, had to be parted with last October for £500. Another little farm at Maltby, for which £1,335 was given, £1,000 being obtained on mortgage, was sold in October, 1901, for £550; and 12 a. 3 r. 15 p. of land at

Friskney, secured in 1882 for £1,070, has since only fetched £555."

The particulars given bear out what we have previously said, viz., that the depression in agriculture is due to low prices, which, in turn, is due to the unfair foreign competition in our markets by foreign farmers.

Rateable Value.

In 1870 the rateable value of "lands" was £39,835,088, or 38 per cent. of the total rates on "all kinds of rateable property" in England and Wales. In 1894 the figures were £33,654,550 and 20·9 per cent. respectively; whilst in 1899 they were £31,312,342 and 17·8 respectively, thus showing great depreciation.

In 1896 it was possible, owing to the Agricultural Rates Act, 1896, for the first time to find out what was the actual rateable value of (*a*) "agricultural land"; the figures prior to that date including (*b*) "lands other than agricultural, farm houses, farm buildings, tithe rent charges, and uncommuted tithes, but excluding lands occupied as railways, canals, quarries, etc." In the sum above given for 1899 is included £7,277,639 (or 4·1 per cent.), being the rateable value of (*b*) just alluded to, the item for (*a*) in that year being, accordingly, £24,034,703 (or 13·7 per cent.).

According to statements furnished to the Local Government Board, the rateable value of "agricultural lands" as defined by the Agricultural Rates Act, 1896, was:—In 1896, £24,565,058; in 1897,

£24,342,620; in 1898, £24,160,332; and in 1899, £24,034,703; or an average annual decrease between 1896 and 1899 of £198,883 or 0·8 per cent. per annum. In 1901, according to Parliamentary Paper No. 300, issued in July, 1903, the rateable value of agricultural land as defined by the Act alluded to, had still further declined to £23,885,995.

Rates and Taxes, Here and Abroad.

Agriculturists have never ceased to complain of the injustice under which they suffer of having so many burdens in the shape of rates and taxes thrown upon them, some of which are certainly more of a national rather than of a local character.

It is interesting, therefore, to observe, that a reference to other countries would appear to show they are justified in the position they take up.

For instance, the total burdens on agriculture in the various countries named below, is as follows*:—

	Per cent. Tax.
United Kingdom	8.3
France	4.8
Germany	3.0
Austria	4.9
Belgium	2.8
Holland	2.8
Italy	7.0

Agricultural Capital, Here and Abroad.

According to Mulhall, the agricultural capital in Great Britain, which in 1840 was 1,968 millions

* Mulhall.

sterling, and in 1891-96 only 1,686 millions sterling, or a decrease of 282 millions, shows a very different and much more serious state of things, when considered in the light of figures relating to the agricultural capital of other countries. The following table shows this at a glance:--

	1840.	1891—96.	
France	1,713	3,093	millions.
Germany	630	2,508	,,
Russia	517	2,710	,,
Austria	702	1,797	,,
Italy	452	1,399	,,
Spain	724	1,212	,,
Denmark	46	254	,,
Holland	246	295	,,
Belgium	235	354	,,
United States	596	4,142	,,
Canada	80	311	,,
Australia	18	392	,,
Argentina	22	198	,,

If the foregoing figures were analysed so as to show the agricultural capital per inhabitant of the various countries, the marked deterioration in the case of the United Kingdom would be considerably more apparent than the figures already indicate; which, amongst other things, show that whilst our agricultural capital has decreased—and enormously—that of every other country cited has gone on increasing and increasing by leaps and bounds. Mr. Mulhall truly points out that, "viewed as a money-making occupation, agriculture is by no means so profitable as other pursuits, for while it represents, broadly, about 40 per cent. of the population and 31 per cent. of the wealth, it stands for only 20 per cent. of the

total earnings of the nations." Agricultural interests stand, indeed, at the highest point in Russia, and lowest in Great Britain and Holland —the former (Great Britain) a free-importing country and the latter (Holland) largely so, whilst Russia is largely Protectionist.

Labour and Wages, Here and Abroad.

The following table gives the average rate of agricultural labourers' wages per week in the countries indicated, and at the dates named:—

Year.	England.	France.	Germany.	United States.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	£ s. d.
1850 ...	9 6	9 0	8 6	0 16 0
1870 ...	15 0	12 6	10 6	1 0 0
1880 ...	17 6	14 0	12 6	1 5 0

Agricultural labour in England has diminished since 1880; whilst in the States especially wages have gone up, and are still doing so. In England, therefore, with a diminishing labour supply the farmer's lot is not a happy one. The average rate is not, in our experience, so high in England to-day as is stated; but, in any case, wages have increased all over the world, and not with us alone. In England, however, the labourer to-day misses the perquisites he used to get. In Cobden's time wages were low because the farmers had rural districts which were over-populated. Cobden admitted this in his speeches (see pages 53 and 57).

FOREIGN DUTIES ON OUR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

The following is a list of the duties charged by certain foreign countries on the commodities, &c., named. The figures are from the latest Blue-Book [Cd. 1735, for 1903] except in the case of the last two articles, and these figures are from the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture:—

Article.	Russia.	Sweden.	Denmark.	Germany.	Holland.	France.	Austria-Hungary.	Roumania.	United States.
Butter, per cwt.	4s. 11d.	11s. 4d.	free	8s. 2d.	free	8s. 1½d.	10s. 2d.	£2 16s. 11d.	£1 8s.
Cheese, ,,	£2 13s. 2d.	11s. 4d.	11s. 9d.	7s. 7d. to 10s. 2d.	4s. 2¼d.	4s. 10d. to 6s. 1d.	5s. 1d. to 10s. 2d.	£1 10s. 6d.	£1 8s.
Hops, ,,	£1 14s. 6d.	5s. 8d.	16s. 6d.	7s. 1d.	free	12s. 2d.	7s. 1d.	10s. 2d.	£2 16s.
Animal, living (for food)	free	1s. 1d. to 11s. 1d. each.	free	1s. to £1 5s. 6d. each.	not specified	8s. 7d. per cwt (oxen, calves, sheep, and pigs)	3s. each for pigs and calves; and average of 11s. each for oxen	Cattle, 2s. to 4s.; sheep, 1s. 7d. each	27½% ad val. for cattle; 4s. 8d. (average) each for sheep; 6s. 3d. each pigs.
Meat (fresh) per cwt.	not specified.	3s. 11½d.	free	7s. 7d. to 8s. 8d.	5s. 1d.	10s. 2d. to 14s. 2d.	6s. 1½d.	12s. 2d.	9s. 4d.
Wheat, per cwt.	free	2s. 1d.	free	1s. 9¼d.	free	2s. 10½d. to 4s. 5½d.	1s. 6d.	free	1s. 11d.
Flour, ,,	2s. 11½d.	3s. 8d.	free	3s. 8½d.	free	4s. 5d. to 6s. 6d.	3s. 9½d.	4s. 10½d.	25% ad val.
Oats, per qr. ...	free	—	free	3s. 11d.	free	3s. 5d.	—	—	5s. 2d.
Barley, per qr...	free	—	free	3s. 8d.	free	4s. 5d.	—	—	10s. 5d.
Horses, each ...	free	free	free	10s. to £1	free	£2 to £6	10s. to 20s.	6s. 5d. to £1	£6 5s. or 25% ad val. up to £7
Wool, per cwt....	19s. 8d. to £2 19s. 6d.	Horse hair, 11s. 4d.; other kinds free	free	free	free	Some free; remainder 4s. to 11s. 2d.	free	3s. 3d. to 10s. 2d.	
Bacon & Hams, per cwt.	7s. 10d.	11s. 4d. to 16s. 4d.	free	10s. 2d.	10d. to 1s. 0¾d.	12s. 2d.	6s. 1½d.	12s. 2d. to £2 0s. 8d.	£1 3s. 4d.
Potatoes, per cwt.	free	free	free	free	free	2d.	free	—	7½d. per 60 lb.
Malt, per cwt.	5s. 11d.	10d.	free	1s. 10d. to 2s. 0d.	free	1s. 7½d.	1s. 6¼d.	3s. 8d.	40% ad val.

CHAPTER III.

COBDENISM.

Mr. Cobden's Agricultural Sayings.

It is many years since we first read the speeches of the late Mr. Cobden, but we have felt compelled to go through the process again since tariff reform became a prominent topic for consideration.

We give below the most important extracts from the speeches wherein the agricultural problem is dealt with.

We take the speeches in order of date, placing a note or comment at the end of each extract:—

Speech, February 17th, 1843 (House of Commons).

(1). "When the agitation was begun for the repeal of the Corn Laws our complaints were met by showing that our commerce was increasing, that the Savings Banks were prospering, that the revenue was improving, and that consumption was augmenting."

Note.—*This is the exact argument adopted to-day by those who oppose tariff reform.*

(2). "The present law has ruined the Corn Law speculators (laughter). You may laugh . . . but when you have ruined the corn speculators who will supply you with foreign wheat?"

NOTE.—*It seems curious that Mr. Cobden should have been interested in corn speculators.*

SPEECH, MAY 15TH, 1843 (HOUSE OF COMMONS).

(3). "Let the farmer perfectly understand that his prosperity depends upon that of his customers."

NOTE.—*Exactly; but by unnatural means the foreigner is allowed to supply those customers.*

(4). "I do not ask for a law to enhance the profits of my business."

NOTE.—*Whether he asked for it or not he got it; because by the repeal of the Corn Laws the labourers flocked to the towns to engage in that extra work which was brought about by the fact that the foreigner who sent his wheat, etc., to us had, at that day, to take in return our manufactured goods.*

(5). "I ask owners if they expect farmers to farm well without long leases?"

NOTE.—*Owners would be only too glad to grant long leases. That is just what they cannot do; because tenants, by foreign competition, feel no certainty as to how long they will be able to stand such competition. Hence, tenants refuse long leases.*

(6). "We (the manufacturers) are the farmers' best friends, their only friends, their best customers."

NOTE.—*This was true in 1843, but it is by no means so true to-day.*

SPEECH, SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1843 (LONDON).

(7). "Landowners have nothing pecuniarily, they have nothing ultimately, to dread from a free trade in corn."

NOTE.—*It may be admitted that owners who have land near large towns suitable for dairy farming, which employs the least amount of labour of any farming, make as much of their land now as formerly; but it is from a national and not from a landowners' point of view that this question ought to be discussed.*

(8). "The home market for food will be doubled."

NOTE.—*Yes; but of what avail is that to the British agriculturist when the foreigner supplies the market, which is what happens so largely under the present system?*

SPEECH, OCTOBER 18TH, 1843 (LONDON).

(9). "Our object is what I always declared it —the benefit of the whole community."

NOTE.—*The farming industry is still the largest in the kingdom, but instead of a benefit our present system of unrestricted free imports has proved quite the contrary.*

(10). "I venture to say that there will be no class that will not be permanently benefited."

NOTE.—*What about agriculture and the 916,347 farmers and labourers who have had to leave agriculture?*

SPEECH, OCTOBER 19TH, 1843 (MANCHESTER).

(11). "The permanent interest of the agriculturist is in the prosperity of his customers."

NOTE.—*That is what it ought to be, but it is not the case in England, for those customers are supplied by the foreigner at the expense of the British agriculturist.*

(12). "I have never been one who believed that the repeal of the Corn Laws would throw an acre of ground out of cultivation."

NOTE.—*We grow 1,853,140 acres less of wheat to-day than in 1866, when the first official figures were published, and there has been an increase of 5,785,681 acres of permanent pasture in the same period.*

(13). "Our object is not to diminish the labour in agricultural districts, but I verily believe that if the principles of free trade are fairly carried out they will give just as much stimulus to the demand for labour in the agricultural as in the manufacturing districts."

NOTE.—*The very reverse has been the case, as everyone knows. There are 916,347 less farmers and labourers, as already stated.*

(14). "Though our agriculturists have much to learn, they are doubtless very much in advance of most of the agriculturists in other countries."

NOTE.—*This is an admittance which should be remembered by those who to-day say that the farmer always was and always is behind others in the business of his calling. As a matter of fact he grows more corn per acre than any other farmer in the world, and his live stock is considerably better also.*

SPEECH, FEBRUARY 8TH, 1844 (LONDON).

(15). "All we ask is that corn, &c., shall find its natural level in the markets of the world."

NOTE.—*But how can the British farmers' corn, meat, &c., find their natural levels when we let in the foreigners' stuff free, and when the foreigner taxes everything we send to him?*

(16). "There are narrow-minded men in the agricultural districts who meet us at every turn with prophecies of what is going to happen in the future; and who tell us, forsooth, that free trade will throw land out of cultivation and deprive the labourers of employment."

NOTE.—*Cobden ridiculed these prophecies; but these prophecies have come true, and his own prophecies have proved false, as we have already shown.*

(17). "I predict that with free trade in the corn, so far from throwing land out of use, or injuring the cultivation of the poorer soils, free trade in corn is the very way to increase the production at home."

NOTE.—*The contrary has been the fact.*

(18). "We do not contemplate deriving a quarter less corn from the soil of this country."

NOTE.—*We cultivate 1,853,140 acres less wheat now than in 1866, as already mentioned.*

(19). "We do not anticipate having one head less of cattle or of sheep."

NOTE.—*The number of head of live stock on the farms of Great Britain in 1903 was 2,674,997 less than in 1869, the first year for which official figures were available.*

SPEECH, MARCH 12TH, 1844 (HOUSE OF COMMONS).

(20). "Farmers valued their farms by a computation that wheat would be such and such a price per quarter owing to the Corn Laws being kept up."

NOTE.—*This was no doubt so pretty generally throughout the various parts of England, but nobody proposes to go back to that system; and, in any case, it would be im-*

possible to revert to such a system, because the people most interested in the question are the artisan and labouring class who, by their votes (which they did not have in Cobden's time), absolutely control the situation. In Cobden's time it was, practically speaking, only those who had a little bit of freehold property of some sort who had a vote.

(21). "The farmer has been told the fallacy that if there was free trade in corn wheat would be so cheap that he would not be able to carry on his farm."

NOTE.—*Mr. Cobden said this was a fallacy; but how many farmers during the last 40 or 50 years have had to give up their farms through not being able to grow wheat and other corn crops, and to feed their stock at a profitable price?*

(22). "There is another point upon which much misrepresentation exists, namely, the price at which corn can be grown abroad. The cost of transit from Dantzic may be put down at 10s. 6d. per quarter. This is the natural protection enjoyed by the farmers of this country. The farmer will thus secure the constant protection of half a guinea per quarter on his corn."

NOTE.—*So far from the farmer having an advantage over the foreigner in the matter of freight the reverse is the case; for wheat can be brought not merely from Dantzic but from America to Liverpool at 2s. to 3s. per quarter!!*

(23). "I do not anticipate that wheat will be reduced below 45s. per quarter, even by free trade, and meat, butter, and cheese will certainly not fall in the same proportion."

NOTE.—*This statement was adopted by Cobden from a letter he received from a correspondent. The facts*

of to-day show that wheat during last year stood on an average at 26s. 9d. per quarter, whilst it has not averaged as high as 40s. for the last 20 or 30 years.

(24). "Less wages are paid upon dairy farms."

NOTE.—*Dairy farming has increased enormously in this country since Cobden's time; whilst arable farming has gone quite the other way about.*

(25). "Farmers are in no way responsible for low wages."

NOTE.—*We hope this admittance by Cobden will be borne in mind by those speaking in rural districts or by those who write on the question of tariff reform.*

(26). "If a Committee is appointed, as I desire, to enquire into the question, evidence may be obtained which will go far to help the landlords out of their difficulty, viz., the means of giving employment to the people. The great want is employment."

NOTE.—*We always said that there was an over-supply of labour in the rural districts at and before Cobden's time which kept down the wages of the labourers. To-day the reverse holds good.*

(27). "How should we manufacturers get on if we got a pattern (a specimen of the productions of a rival manufacturer), and if we brought all our people together and then said, 'It is quite clear that we cannot compete with this foreigner; it is quite useless attempting to compete with Germany or America; why we could not produce the goods at the price they do.' But how do we manufacturers act in reality? We call our men together and say, 'So-and-so is producing goods at such a price, but we are Englishmen, and what

Germany or America can do we can do also.' The opposite system, which the rural interest goes upon, is demoralising the farmers."

NOTE.—*Mr. Cobden could not adopt the same system to-day; as he would be bound by the Trades Unions he cordially hated, who insist upon a certain wage being paid to their members, and that those members shall only work a certain number of hours. Still less, if he were a farmer could he adopt any such system.*

SPEECH, JULY 3RD, 1844 (LONDON).

(28). "We do not believe that free trade in corn will injure the farmer; we are convinced it will benefit the tenant farmer as much as any trader or manufacturer of the community."

NOTE.—*The prophet was wrong. Whilst the manufacturer has gone on prospering (up to the last 15 or 20 years), farmers are still nearly at the top of the list in the total number of bankruptcies annually recorded by the Board of Trade, and they have been so ever since the Board of Trade issued official statistics in 1885! No doubt they were before, too.*

(29). "We are satisfied that those landowners who improve their estates and surrender more political power by granting long leases to the farmers, will increase the productiveness of their estates, and will not suffer pecuniarily."

NOTE.—*As everybody knows, who has enquired into the subject, owners have enormously "improved" their estates. The "productiveness" of the land, however, is of no benefit because of foreign competition with the produce of their tenants. As to "leases," landlords are only too glad to get tenants who desire leases, which is the exception rather than the rule.*

(30). "We believe that free trade will increase the demand for labour of every kind."

NOTE.—*What about agriculture, where the labour supply has diminished, year after year, for the last 50 years and more?*

SPEECH, OCTOBER 24TH, 1844 (MANCHESTER).

(31). "I speak my unfeigned conviction when I say that there is no interest in this country that would receive so much benefit from the repeal of the Corn Laws as the tenant farmer interest. When the future historian comes to write the history of agriculture he will have to state 'From the time the Corn Law was repealed, agriculture sprang up to the full vigour of existence in England, to become what it is now, like our manufactures, unrivalled in the world.'"

NOTE.—*We wonder what those who believe in Cobden's theories will have to say to this unfeigned conviction, which has been absolutely falsified by the result?*

SPEECH, DECEMBER 11TH, 1844 (LONDON).

(32). In this speech Mr. Cobden spoke of Mr. Henry Clay, who had stood for the Presidency of America on the ground of his being the author and the father of the protective system in America. Mr. Clay, Mr. Cobden said, was rejected "at the hands of 3 millions of citizens, who," he added, "sent him back to his retirement."

NOTE.—*To-day, as all the world knows, America is more protective than ever; her artisans insist upon the system; and they, with the Germans, are our greatest competitors in the whole world, and have been for many years.*

SPEECH, JANUARY 15TH, 1845 (LONDON).

(33). "You compete with foreigners now, and all we say is that you will be able to do so better if you have your bread at the same price as your competitors have."

NOTE.—*We wonder if the Cobdenites of to-day will adopt this argument. They have been saying all over the country, that bread is cheaper in England than abroad. All Cobden wanted apparently was that our bread should be as cheap as the foreigners, which, at the time he spoke, was not the case! And yet the foreigners were, and still are, Protectionists!*

(34). "The introduction of more corn, cattle, butter, and cheese, will not hurt the farmer in this country."

NOTE.—*Then why is the farmer, in 99 cases out of 100, asking for the adoption of Mr. Chamberlain's preferential tariff proposals? And why has foreign competition lowered prices so much and made labour so scarce?*

SPEECH, MARCH 13TH, 1845 (HOUSE OF COMMONS).

(35). "The want of capital is the greatest want among the farmers, and the want of leases is the cause of the want of capital."

NOTE.—*Farmers, in the great majority of cases, would be glad to have a little more capital even to-day, but they certainly don't want leases, and only in exceptional cases will they take them. Besides, they had more capital years ago than they have to-day.*

(36). "Take cheese. There is not a farmer but who makes his own cheese for the consumption of his servants."

NOTE.—*There is scarcely a farmer, except in the cheese-making districts, to-day, who does anything of the sort*

(for want of trade), and thus the cheese-making industry has gone down hill, year after year.

(37). "On the last occasion on which I spoke in this House, I was answered by the right honourable gentleman, Mr. W. E. Gladstone, President of the Board of Trade; and that right honourable gentleman talked of us free traders throwing poor land out of cultivation and throwing other land out of tillage into pasture."

NOTE.—*Mr. Gladstone was right, and Mr. Cobden was wrong. Consult the statistics.*

(38). "The landlords have absolute power in the country; there is no doubt about it."

NOTE.—*Such was the case; but, to-day, the landlords have not that power, and therefore, nobody who attempts to deal with fiscal reform would be so mad as to bring in a reform mainly for the benefit of landowners. The fact is, Mr. Chamberlain's proposals are a working-man's question, as he himself has said, and if adopted they will result in increased work for working-men, besides drawing the Colonies and the Mother Country much closer together, which we, of course, ardently desire to do.*

(39). "The last Census shows that you cannot employ the labourers in the agricultural districts. There are too many of them, it is said."

NOTE.—*Precisely. There was over-population in the rural districts, and, consequently, where there were two or three men after one job, wages would necessarily go down. They did go down, therefore, in Cobden's time.*

(40). "We all know that the Allotments system has been taken up. It is a plaything. It is a failure."

NOTE.—*If Mr. Cobden had spent half the energy in putting people on to the land that he spent in opening*

our ports to unrestricted free trade, he would have done a far better thing for the rural districts of the country than he has done. At any rate, it seems an extraordinary thing that he should speak of the Allotments system in the unsympathetic terms quoted. Ask the 200,000 *to* 300,000 *men what they think of allotments; and who have got them since Cobden's time.*

SPEECH, JUNE 18TH, 1845 (LONDON).

(41). "We have all said something different from what we have said now. Have we not all grown wiser?"

NOTE.—*Let us hope so.*

SPEECH, JULY 18TH, 1846 (MANCHESTER).

(42). "I believe if you abolish the Corn Law honestly and adopt free trade in its simplicity, there will not be a tariff in Europe that will not be changed in less than five years to follow your example."

NOTE.—*This was said in 1846. It is now nearly sixty years since then, and European countries have not even yet changed to follow our example.*

SPEECH, JANUARY 9TH, 1853 (AYLESBURY).

(43). Mr. Cobden was talking of wages at Aylesbury, in 1853, and he went on to say "that men were earning more, and getting more of the comforts and necessaries of life, and that at two-thirds, and even less, of the prices of 1847."

NOTE.—*A voice, presumably that of a labourer, answered that it was not so with the agricultural labourers, whereupon Mr. Cobden, somewhat angrily, answered that the labourers at Aylesbury were not the*

nation. The man's ejaculation would seem to show that the opinion was held that Mr. Cobden advocated free trade rather in order to get cheap labour in the towns than for anything else. The cheap bread could not possibly have been imported, as we only imported 3,000 to 6,000 quarters of wheat and wheat-flour per annum between 1846 and 1853; whilst the price of wheat was actually higher from 1850 to 1855, namely, 53s. 3½*d. per quarter, than in 1845 to 1850, when it was* 51s. 8½d. *per quarter. In 1845 it was* 50s. 10d. *per quarter. The labourer therefore, was probably right, and Cobden wrong.*

CHAPTER IV.

COBDENISM (Continued).

Typical Cobdenite Arguments.

It is curious that men, otherwise well informed, should refer to our present fiscal system as one of "Free" Trade.

For instance, Mr. G. Armitage-Smith, M.A., in the latest edition of his book—"The Free Trade Movement and its Results," which is dated 1903—says that his study and experience "only more deeply convince him that a free-trade policy is essential to the well-being of this country"; these remarks following a paragraph in which reference is made to the origin of the movement connected with Mr. Chamberlain's name. It would puzzle Mr. Armitage-Smith, or anyone else, to show that free trade, as we know it, is what Cobden meant; whilst it is not, of course, free trade in fact.

The same gentleman, in his volume, has a chapter devoted to "British Agriculture and Free Trade"; and, if we deal with this writer at all, it is simply because we have found him, in argument, a typical Cobdenite. The chapter, however, in question is out of date in part, and shows a sad and lamentable want of knowledge

of the results—general and specific—of our free import system upon agriculture, and by consequence, upon the other national industries.

The author starts with the statement that "Protection," as he calls it, has been invoked mainly on behalf of farmers. This was doubtless true when the book was first written, but it is scarcely true to-day. He says, too, that the manufacturers "are mostly free traders." We are all free traders if we can get free trade as Cobden understood it, but our manufacturers—or those of them who have the greatest interest in the trade of the nation—are certainly not believers in the free import system, or we should not have lived to witness the remarkable spectacle of manufacturers north, south, east, and west asking for a revision of the present absurd fiscal system.

"Farming is the least progressive of our national industries," we are told. It would be no discredit if it were, seeing how capital has been frightened from the land during the last thirty or forty years or more; but it is simply not true, and both now and in Cobden's time our farmers produce more corn per acre and produce better live stock, whether horses, cattle, sheep, or pigs, than any farmers in the world. We are told that agriculture employed "3½ millions" of "labourers" in the United Kingdom in (presumably) Cobden's time, whilst in 1895 only "2½ millions" found work upon the soil. It would be interesting to know how the proof upon which this statement rests is obtained, as, according

to the Census, the number of "farmers, labourers, &c.," in England and Wales occupied in agriculture in 1851 was 1,904,687, and in 1901, 988,340. It is true that the author refers to the United Kingdom, but it is pretty certain in our mind that there were not $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions and $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions of agricultural "labourers" at the dates he mentions, respectively. But, even if there were, it would rather assist the case of tariff reformers than otherwise.

"The repeal of the Corn Laws," we are gravely told, "did not operate injuriously to agriculture." The statement is not founded on fact; everyone knows that in spite of improved machinery—which enables more work to be accomplished in a much less time than by hand—and in spite of pedigree seed, and improved live stock of all descriptions, the main cause of farmers being so badly off to-day is the lower prices they have received owing to unfair foreign competition. Almost in the same breath, however, the author assures us that "agricultural imports increased" up to the seventies, and that "demand kept pace"; whilst, "excepting corn and wool, prices did not fall materially for some years"—which is just what we say, namely, that owing to the low prices realised for arable produce farmers have neither been able to make fair profits nor to employ a fair amount of labour, whilst these low prices themselves are in their turn due to foreign imports.

We are informed that it was from about 1879,

owing to bad seasons (which some of us very well remember) that depression in agriculture began, and that it has not recovered since; and then, curiously, the author at once admits that a chief cause of this depression continuing is what we have stated, namely, foreign competition.

The author next has a tilt at the Agricultural Rates Act, 1896, by which the rates on farm lands have been lowered; and he adds—without a shadow of proof—that the measure will confer no permanent advantage upon farmers. He should remember that half a loaf is better than no bread, and that permanent or not, great advantage has been received by the farmers, whilst it still remains for him or anybody else to prove that the Act has failed in any particular.

Dealing with what he calls the remedy of "Protection," the author, in characteristic Cobdenite fashion, says, "for good or evil, Great Britain has become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of more than 70 per cent. of her consumption; that cheap food is essential to her industrial supremacy; and that only by free importation can an adequate supply be obtained." Does Mr. Chamberlain propose to prevent cheap food? Does he not expressly say that he wants wheat to come in free from our Colonies; and, is it not known to everyone who cares to know, that Canada alone could supply in a very short period all the wheat we require? How is it possible to place reliance in a guide who omits all reference to facts like these?

It is perfectly true that "under 30 years of exceptionally strong 'protection' food was dear, and that at the same time the farming classes complained frequently and bitterly." Why? Would it not be more becoming to state the reason? We will do so. Food was "dear" because rents were high; and the farming classes "complained" owing to the fact that whilst they had to pay large rents on the basis of corn being kept up at a high figure by Act of Parliament, the seasons sometimes proved inauspicious, and rents had still to be paid. Moreover, as Cobden declared, tenants were unable to obtain "leases" for any lengthened period; and consequently, if they began to do well, up went rents. Is there, however, a man in his senses who thinks this possible to-day? Who in Cobden's time had the political power? Was it not the landlords; and did not Cobden, over and over again, expressly state so? Who has it now? Is it not the labourers and artisans? And does not political power carry with it the ability to secure whatever laws the possessors of the political power may desire? Of course it does, and nobody recognised that fact more than Mr. Cobden himself; for he was insistent upon it in practically every speech that he made of an agricultural character. And yet Mr. Armitage-Smith quietly ignores the difference between then and now in this all-important matter!

We are told that from 1846 "there have been but two enquiries into agricultural depression."

He mentions those of 1880 and 1893. It is a pity he does not—in writing in 1903—tell us the results of the report of the Royal Commission issued in 1897. For his benefit and for that of those who think like him, we may add that the Commissioners came to the conclusion that low prices were the chief cause of the agricultural depression; whilst they mentioned foreign competition in connection with such prices. "One conclusion," the Commissioners stated, "which cannot fail to be drawn from a perusal of the evidence before us is, that amongst all classes of agriculturists there is a consensus of opinion that the chief cause of existing depression is the progressive and serious decline in the prices of farm produce"; whilst, as to foreign competition, of the witnesses which gave evidence before that Commission no less than 42 of them, including some of those whose names are "household words" amongst agriculturists, declared that "the fall in prices has been directly connected with the increase in foreign competition"; another, but not so serious a cause being the cost of production. As for the remedy for these low prices and foreign competition, the Commissioners stated, "the remedy for the present state of things suggested by the majority of witnesses has been a return to measures of protection; nor is it possible to ignore the fact that a great many farmers throughout the country share this view." The Commissioners themselves, whilst evidently sym-

pathising with the view held by the majority of the witnesses, did not actually incorporate Protection in one of their recommendations, but they did include an alteration in the currency, namely, for establishing bi-metallism. Mr. Armitage-Smith, however, accepts with alacrity the Commissioners' more or less definite views on one matter, namely, on Protection; but on the other, bi-metallism, he absolutely disagrees with them, which apparently shows that he accepts, without argument, the Commissioner's views when it suits his purpose to do so, and disagrees altogether with the views held by the great majority of witnesses and farmers themselves when it does not suit his purpose. It seems to us that the men practically engaged in agriculture are better guides even than the Commissioners in a matter of this sort.

Our author says: "Agriculture presents four distinct interests or aspects for consideration, namely, the interest of the agricultural labourer, farmer, landlord, and consumer." The consumer is undoubtedly benefited by low prices and abundance. The labourers, we are told, have benefited, although, it is added, "there is a decline in their efficiency." Landlords, it is apparently admitted—indeed, it cannot be denied, for the facts are too patent to the least casual enquirer—have suffered greatly in a fall of rents; especially in the arable districts. As an off-set to this fall of rents we are asked to remember that prices of consumable goods have also fallen;

so that a landlord buying bread and other consumable goods pays less for the same just as does the rest of the community. This is a curious sort of argument, and it is strange that the author of it should rest content with it; for what has become of the labourers whom the landlords used to employ, and what has become of the local tradesmen whom they used to be the chief supporters of in the way of trade? Their employment has been taken away; and it is no comfort to a man to know that the articles he wishes to consume are half the price they used to be if he has not the money necessary wherewith to purchase them. It would be, in his case, at any rate, better for the articles to remain at a rather higher price if, by work, he also has the money wherewith to buy them.

We said above that our author does not quote the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, issued in 1897; but he does, later on, although he ought to have done so at the point above referred to, where he could have done it in a direction which would have told very much against the argument he was seeking to establish. However, in quoting that report (as we say) "later on," he says that farmers had for the previous twenty years received on an average only 60 per cent. of the sum which was in past days considered an ordinary rate of average profit, and the reason for this he rightly puts down to foreign competition. We are told to console ourselves, as British farming is only "undergoing

an experience common to all industries"; that is to say, it has changed from arable to pasture. We are asked to be satisfied. That is the suggestion, not of a wise man, but, rather, of a philosophic pedant. When did a country remain permanently prosperous either on pastoral farming or by commerce? Is not the cultivated land the ultimate source of wealth? And why should we, in this country, not make it worth the while of man to cultivate the land? Is there national stability in any sense in town life? Mr. Armitage-Smith looks at the "money" results of free imports; and that, unfortunately, is the be-all and end-all of so many free import thinkers and writers. But is it all? Assuredly not!

Dealing with the British farmers' backwardness, Mr. Armitage-Smith speaks of Denmark, and of the success which has attended the efforts of that country in butter-making. He then quotes Sir W. Windmeyer, of New South Wales, to show what that State has done by co-operation in butter-making; and he suggests we are apparently behind them in their methods. It is a pity our author did not state the whole truth about this matter. We may as well do what he has omitted, and do it in a very short space too. The truth is that the British farmer does not go in for co-operative butter-making like the farmers of Denmark or of New South Wales, because he makes more money at the present time than the farmers of either of those countries by selling

his milk to town firms, who sell it retail at our doors.

Mr. Armitage-Smith then talks about "the utmost science being applied to agricultural pursuits in other countries." Our own farmers are certainly not behind in skill those of other countries or they could not produce more corn per acre and produce better live stock than the farmers in any other part or parts of the world. Moreover, scientific education in agriculture is undoubtedly greatly spreading with us, and has been for many years; but we have yet to come across the scientific farmer in this country who can make his farm pay. Perhaps Mr. Armitage-Smith can tell us of one, when, if permitted, we will gladly pay a visit to see for ourselves what has been accomplished. Meanwhile, it is a little bit too gratuitous to lecture British farmers in the way Mr. Armitage-Smith does, and at the same time to give doubtful "facts" to support his inuendoes and statements. What —we should like to know—are the scientific methods which the British farmer does not employ, but which if he did would ensure his farming being profitable? "Cattle and dairy farming supplemented by the rearing of fowls, would seem," we are told, "at present to be the most paying side of British farming." We do not dispute the statement; and it is because Mr. Chamberlain's proposals will enable this work to be even more successful that we are surprised Mr. Armitage-Smith does not support them. He

seems, in fact, to be all at sea when we come to boil down his comments and to find out what the practical issue of them really means; and, when he might with advantage apply Mr. Chamberlain's proposals to the benefit of agriculture, he, for some reason best known to himself, neglects to do so. He does not argue them upon their merits, and seems, indeed, not to grasp their importance. It is all very well to say we must know this, that, and the other, and must be advanced educationists. Of course we must; but it so happens that the most advanced and practical farmers whom we have come across are not only abreast of the latest knowledge in their particular lines of agricultural work, but are tariff reformers as well; whilst, we may add, the Central Chamber of Agriculture—the most representative body of agriculturists in the Kingdom—has also passed a resolution in favour of Mr. Chamberlain's preferential tariff proposals. Mr. Armitage-Smith knows nothing of these things; hence it is we have considered it well to say a few words which we hope may do something to set him and others right regarding them.

Mr. Armitage-Smith in his volume also has a chapter entitled "Preferential Tariffs." It is condemnatory of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals. We refrain from a further discussion of the author's views as contained in this chapter, not because there is no satisfactory answer to them but because the chapter, generally, consists of such a jumble of pedantic statements, and is con-

ceived in such a biassed—rather than an impartial—spirit almost from the beginning to the end, and shows such palpable ignorant dogmatism as to the practical bearings of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals, that no one who has really endeavoured to think out what those proposals are would ever dream of answering a mere parody of them.

REMARKABLE COBDEN CLUB VIEWS.

In 1888 the Cobden Club lent its name, reputation, and authority to the publication of a book which bore the title, "The British Farmer and his Competitors." We thought at the time the statements in the book were remarkable. We think so still.

We dig this little volume out to-day only to compare the facts of the present with the statements, opinions, &c., of the author or Club at the time we speak of. We do so the more willingly, as, of course, nowadays everybody but the Cobden Club admits that agriculture is badly off, or, as Lord Rosebery says, is "crippled." The Cobden Club, however, will, we imagine, hardly care to be referred to views, not of 1843 or thereabouts, but even so recently as 1888; and yet the public may have a little interest in them, though we may at once say that those desiring the book under notice will find, as we have found, a difficulty in getting a copy of it, the Club having, it informed us, ceased to circulate it.

We were, for instance, told (in 1888) that "it

is certainly very much to the disadvantage of the country that land should be diverted from arable cultivation to grass"; and then, it is added, that "the non-agricultural classes will be wise, even from a selfish point of view, if they not only refrain from opposing, but earnestly help forward any reasonable reforms or concessions which give farmers a fair chance of meeting foreign competition." The Cobden Club has, of course, never done anything to bring back grass to ploughland; and its attitude even now is opposed to the reforms which the great body of agricultural opinion considers "reasonable."

The "wheat-growing area of the world has already (1888) begun to contract," says the book, and "will be seriously diminished unless the average price of wheat is about 40s. a quarter in England." The very reverse has been the fact; and wheat in England has not for years been "about 40s. a quarter," whilst last year it was only 26s. 9d.

The Club's author asked, "Will the foreign supplies of wheat keep up at anything like current (1888) prices?" and he answered his own question by saying, "My contention is that they will not." Price or no price being "kept up," the supplies have kept up, and that is the practical part of the whole business.

The "land of this country," said the writer, "will not bear all the burdens laid upon it in more prosperous times." Anyone knows that; but the party mainly identified with the Cobden

Club has persistently and consistently opposed each and every reform brought in by those who have sought to remove any of the said burdens, and it is still so opposed.

Then we are told that "at 36s. a quarter only will the best of the wheat lands—and those only—pay a living profit." Moreover, "on the whole, it can scarcely be profitable to grow wheat here at a lower range of prices than 36s. to 40s. per quarter." Wheat has not averaged 40s. a quarter since 1883, and yet the Cobden Club has contented itself, and still contents itself, with platitudes, and with opposing every effort of the great body of farmers themselves to alter the situation.

Finally, our sapient Club, by its patronage of the book in question, said "it would be absurd to suppose that land in this country . . . . will go out of cultivation." Well, since 1866, the first year the official figures were available, the area devoted to wheat has decreased from 3,350,394 acres to 1,497,254 acres in 1903; the area devoted to permanent pasture has, in the same period, increased from 11,148,814 acres to 16,934,495 acres; and the number of horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs has, since 1869 (the first year the official figures were available), decreased from 38,243,127 head to 36,568,130 head, in spite of the great increase in our general population! Agricultural capital, too, has enormously decreased; and the number of farmers and labourers, which in 1851 was 1,904,687, has decreased to 988,340 at the last Census of 1901.

It looks, therefore, as though the land has gone largely out of arable cultivation!

Another publication issued in 1903 under the Club's auspices is entitled "Free Trade, and the English Farmer." After talking round the subject and insinuating what he does not prove, the author dismisses the main point in preferential tariff reform (*i.e.*, as it affects feeding stuffs for live stock), in less than seven lines as follows:—"But let us," 'say some Protectionists,' "put a duty on flour, and permit grain to come in free; then the millers, grinding more corn, and getting a higher price for flour, will sell the offals cheaply to the farmers." "Such," says the writer of the publication, "it was claimed, would be the result of the differential duties on corn and flour so lately imposed, and so promptly repealed."

If the writer in question had but stated the facts regarding those duties and what was claimed for them he would have had to admit what has been asserted will result if we insist on the foreigner, as far as we can, sending us the whole wheat instead of the flour only; for it is well known—and is proved by the official statistics in another part of this volume—that when those duties were imposed we, in that year, imported less flour, and also ground nearly 10 million cwts. more flour in British mills. We are not surprised, therefore, that the Cobden Club's writer should dismiss this "offals" question in the space alluded to. The extra employment created when

the differential duties were on—as shown by the increased British milling—is proof, we think, that a similar result would accrue were some such expedient resorted to as was resorted to when the duties above referred to were imposed.

The mere man in the street may naturally ask what the Cobden Club really knows about agriculture, and what value, if any, can be attached to its assertions on any trade when, in regard to the oldest and largest industry in the kingdom, it is so glaringly at fault—both in 1888 and in 1903!

CHAPTER V.

TARIFF REFORM AND ITS EFFECTS.

The proposed tariff is 2s. per quarter on "foreign" corn; 5 per cent. on "foreign" dairy produce and meat; and 10 per cent. on "foreign" manufactured implements, &c.; and in this chapter we deal with the probable effects of the tariff upon agriculture and agriculturists. There is to be no tariff on any goods from our Colonies; and no tariff on foreign maize or foreign bacon.

We may say at once that as Mr. Chamberlain's proposals are intended, so far as corn growing is concerned, to give a preference to the Colonies over the foreigner in our markets, it is clearly not intended, or likely, that corn-growing, for instance, in Great Britain will receive any particular impetus by their adoption. We agree with the best-informed agricultural opinion that the future of British farming will be mainly in a stock-raising and dairying direction, accompanied by a large increase in small holdings for the production of those smaller articles of the farm which can be grown best by what is popularly expressed as the "small man."

Opponents of Mr. Chamberlain have, on the one hand, asked how, if the farmer is not given a high tariff on foreign corn, will he be bene-

fited (not that *they* wish to benefit the farmer in that way); and on the other hand, they have said to the farmer that Mr. Chamberlain proposes, if his suggestions are adopted, still to allow our markets to be "flooded" with corn, which, however, will be produced in the Colonies, and not in foreign countries. Questions or statements of this sort are beside the point, and are pure political trickery to which no importance should be attached. Mr. Chamberlain has a very definite object in view, as we understand him, and that is to encourage a reciprocal and certain trade with our Colonies, and, at the same time, to cement those bonds of friendship and affection by the additional ties which commerce would give. Accordingly, in considering his proposals we have noted, like farmers at large, with lively satisfaction, that although there is no special inducement to the British cultivator to increase his area of corn as a profit-growing crop for feeding our people, there will be every inducement to him to keep more stock, which he will certainly feed at a cheaper rate, increasing his arable area at the same time. More stock means more roots, and, to a certain extent, more straw. Farmers are bound to have straw—even as they have it at present—although it does not prove by itself a profitable thing to grow.

On the question of manure, the farmer at present relies mainly on the home (or British) manufactured commodity; and, therefore, tariff reform will have practically little effect in this

direction, in other words an average tariff of 10 per cent. on the few imported manufactured articles coming within this category is not likely at all to affect the cultivator. The great bulk of the manures consists of raw material which will arrive here untaxed.

Tariff and the Live Stock.

As we have said, it is on the great and all-important question of feeding stuffs where the particular interests of farmers come in; and as, therefore, the effect of tariff reform will be felt so much in this direction, we devote some attention to it.

How, then, are the live stock of the farm fed on the best farms, for it is necessary to know something on that point?

As to horses, the food required in winter consists mainly of oat-straw, beans, and oat-straw chaffed; whilst, in summer, the bulk of the food is grass, or some green forage crop, to which may be added some straw chaff and a liberal supply of oats.

Regarding sheep the winter diet for fattening sheep is chiefly swedes and a small proportion of hay, undecorticated cotton cake, linseed cake, and oats; whilst, in summer, there is usually given a very small supply of linseed cake and of undecorticated cotton cake, and a very liberal supply of grass picked up in the fields. In-lamb ewes receive as a dietary mostly grass, together with a little hay, oats, and bran, daily.

In the case of fattening bullocks the dietary in winter consists largely of roots (such as swedes), linseed cake, and oat-straw. In summer the oat-straw and the roots may be dropped off, whilst the linseed cake may be diminished by about a half.

The food which dairy cows will eat in winter-time will consist of such dry food as oat-straw chaffed, hay, sharps, and pollard, undecorticated cotton cake, oats and beans; or of roots (such as mangolds and turnips), hay, undecorticated cotton cake, and oat-straw chaffed. Brewers' grains are also largely used by farmers as food for milch-cows in the winter. In summer-time the cows will need very little else but grass, although the more expert farmers reckon to give a small quantity of sharps and pollard, undecorticated cotton cake, and beans.

With regard to pigs, fattening animals are commonly given maize, barley-meal, and sharps and pollard; whilst in the case of sows, the food consists most frequently of sharps and pollard, and bran.

Poultry, too, consume large quantities of maize, and of offals from the wheat, all the year round, but especially in winter-time; and this consumption is a specially important matter to all who keep poultry for profit.

The above statement supplies a very good idea of the foods given daily, according to the season of the year, to live-stock; but of course the stock-owner—whether of horses, bullocks, cows, sheep,

pigs, or poultry—will have to keep his eyes upon the markets to see how the prices of feeding stuffs vary, because it might be more profitable to him on some occasions to give more of one food and less of another, according to the prices of the foods concerned, and this will be especially so if he can get good and cheap wheat offals.

There seems no doubt, however, that those stock-owners who would mostly benefit by a re-arrangement of our tariff system would be: (1) dairy farmers who use such large quantities of meals for their cows, especially in that part of the year when there is no grass available; (2) the pig-owner, whether he be an allotment-holder with his one sow or porker, the small-holder with his two or three, or the regular and larger breeder of pigs—each of which animals consumes such a large proportion of offals and barley-meal; and (3) all who keep poultry for profit.

It seems a reasonable supposition that the wheat-meal, or the bran, sharps and pollard, and the barley-meal, of which so much is already used at high prices on every farm, would come down at least 4d. to 6d. in every shilling from present prices, were we to obtain from our Colonies the wheat, &c., which they are only too willing to supply, instead of our obtaining from, for instance, the Yankee (as now) the manufactured flour without the offals, which offals he keeps and feeds to his own live stock, ultimately dumping such live stock upon our markets in the same way as he does his flour. And it stands

to reason that if our home supply of wheat offals is largely added to by the wheat offals from the Colonial-grown grain the price of offals generally must come down.

If the supply of Colonial offals is likely, as we have said, to be a large one, then those purchasing offals must, of necessity, share in the benefits resulting from lower prices. We find, on this point, that in 1903 we imported 20,601,191 cwt. of wheat-flour. This quantity means 2,307,333,392 lb. of flour; and, according to the amount of offals obtainable from an official quarter of wheat of 480 lb. (a test which was conducted at our request by a British miller) we find that whilst we received the above weight of flour from the foreigner, the latter kept for his own use the offals, which would amount to 247,461 quarters. How far such a large quantity of most valuable feeding material would go towards assisting in the feeding of the live stock of this country, every working-man who keeps a pig or poultry, every small holder who keeps one or more head of any class of cattle or pigs, and every farmer—whether he be a dairy farmer or a grazier—will be able to form an opinion for himself. At any rate, it is clear that the foreigner is too cute for us; and if, therefore, by such an arrangement as Mr. Chamberlain suggests, we can deal with our Colonies and have the whole wheat sent to us instead merely of the flour, we stand to do ourselves a very good turn indeed, and at the same time we shall be doing a good turn

to our Colonies, who will supply not only all the wheat but all the barley, oats &c., we require (and not supplied by ourselves). Maize is to come in free—and that, of course, is largely used as a stock food by all classes of farmers.

By tariff reform we shall get, as has been suggested, the whole of the grain—wheat, barley, and oats; whilst the meal we shall grind out ourselves. It is clear, therefore, as already suggested, that we shall get a large increase in the supply of feeding stuffs, which must lower the cost of feeding the poultry, pigs, cows, bullocks, and horses. To this extent every working-man and every farmer who keeps one or more head of such stock will benefit.

There are, however, some other feeding stuffs. For instance, we import a lot of rice and rice-meal, the latter of which is, at any rate, used largely by some stock-owners. As this comes mainly from our East Indian possessions it will, under tariff reform, come in free of duty. We also import cattle cakes from India, and here again, such will come in free. On the other hand, we get from the Continent and from America linseed and linseed cake, and also cotton cakes; but the duty on these—even if a duty is imposed at all (which, being in the nature of raw material to the farmer is not likely to be the case)—will not, we may take it, be more than 10 per cent., and certainly this will not prove a serious item, as the quantities are not large when considered from the point of view of each farmer.

On the question of feeding stuffs, therefore, for our live stock, the allotment holder with his pig, the small holder with his pig or cow or both, and the larger farmer with his varied live stock, will all feed such stock at a considerably less price than now—from 30 to 50 per cent. cheaper.

Tariff and Machinery.

Having dealt with the live stock of the farm and tariff reform, let us now say a word or two on the question of the dead stock, to see how the cost of this is affected by the proposed tariff changes.

In the first place, let us take the allotment holder or gardener. He wants a spade, a fork, watering can, hoe, rake, and if he grows corn he may have a small allotment plough suitable for a pony to draw, a harrow, perhaps a cultivator, and one or two other miscellaneous items—such as a wheel-barrow, and other articles—some of which are commonly made by himself. In any case he would not purchase the foregoing more than about once in a lifetime, and never all at once. The actual implements, &c., referred to would be suitable not merely for an allotment of an acre, but for a small holder, and could be purchased for about £10. The proposed tariff of 10 per cent. on £10 comes to £1, and that is the amount he would have to pay once in a lifetime, supposing (which is altogether doubtful) he had to pay the whole of the duty either on the imported goods if they were imported, or upon the British made goods, if these went up in

price owing to higher wages received by the British artisan.

In the second place, let us take the case of the average farmer. We have for very many years travelled amongst the agricultural community, and we say without any fear of well-informed contradiction that the average outlay per annum on new machinery does not come to more than £10 to £20 at the most. The farmer may purchase one of the latest and best swathe turners for £15 15s., a mower or tedder for £16 and £13 13s. respectively, a horse rake for £15 10s., a cultivator from £12 to £15, a corn mill for £16, a manure distributor for £20, a drill from £3 to £10, a self-binder for £40, a cream separator for £20, or less, and a few other articles. We have taken these prices as being the cost of the latest and most improved implements exhibited at the last show of the Royal Agricultural Society, and they may be accepted, therefore, as being accurate. When a farmer wants one or other of these articles, will a 10 per cent. duty upon it kill or "cripple" him? The question is too ridiculous for serious consideration! Suppose, however, he spent, what not one farmer nowadays does in a thousand, namely, £500 on new machinery on taking to a farm, and suppose, further, every bit of it was American or foreign, or that, if English, it was increased by an average 10 per cent. duty, which Mr. Chamberlain proposes to put on the corresponding "imported" manufactured goods. This extra cost

would come to £50; and he would be stocked with all the latest appliances, and such as would, with the occasional repairs which a farmer now has to make, last him a lifetime. Now, it used to be considered that a farmer ought to have £10 of capital for every acre he desired to farm. For argument's sake, we shall suppose the farmer has £5; and we are willing to admit that in the great majority of cases to-day, owing to general agricultural depression, he has not even that sum. Very well, on a farm of 200 acres, which would be but of moderate size, his capital would therefore be £1,000 on the lowest computation, whilst on a 400 acre farm it would be £2,000. Will any man say that in return for the expenditure of the extra £50 referred to, once in a lifetime, the returns offered him in another direction by tariff reform are not vastly greater? The fact is, that the whole £50 would be recouped on most farms in one or two years at the outside, and would be an excellent investment at that. The "extra cost for machinery" bogey does not, we are glad to think, frighten the farmer, although, by the way, from some mere politicians' talk he ought to be frightened out of his wits on this score by now.

Small and Large Occupiers.

The small occupier, whether he be a small holder who depends largely upon fruit and vegetables for his living, or a market gardener who makes a speciality of, say, potatoes, strawberries, or some other commodity, will benefit probably

more in proportion to his holding than the larger farmer.

For example. We were recently in a Midlands town, and we found the "small men," who had a little bit of land, were buying their offals at the rate of 1s. per 14 lb. That is ruination. It means 8s. per cwt., or £8 per ton, for sharps and pollard. The adjoining farmers, however, who bought in larger quantities, were paying not more than £6 per ton. Now, if the former were to pay from 8d. to 6d., instead of 1s. per 14 lb.—which is not at all an unreasonable supposition—they would, we venture to say, appreciate the saving or the advantage much more than the farmer, who under the same tariff arrangements, would pay £3 to £4 per ton instead of £6.

The small man, however, may, as indeed many do in the West of England—particularly down in Cornwall—grow potatoes for the early British market. By dint of every care the Cornishman is able, should the season be favourable, to forestall much of the foreign competition. If the climatic conditions are adverse the foreigner gets our markets, as was the case, in part, in 1903. The Britisher accordingly suffers a very serious drawback. Both political parties in the State have for the last twenty years or so had in view the encouragement (judged by what they have both said) of the allotments and small holdings systems, but it says very little for those amongst them who are

afraid to go a step further—that step further being to tax the foreigner to a small extent (the 5 per cent. referred to) for the privilege he has of taking profits from our own people. There are many who urge that the foreign goods ought to be kept out until such time as the English articles are ready for market; in which case, they could all compete on equal terms, and the public would benefit by the double supply and the lower prices which would naturally ensue. Under the present *regime*, however, if, as one small holder put it to us, the "bottom" is knocked out of the potato trade by the existing foreign competition, at a period of the year when the climate turns against our own growers, and our goods are by consequence two to three weeks later in maturing, it is "hard lines" that the British growers should have to bear all the anxiety, trouble, and loss, and that the foreigner should benefit at their expense. It seems only reasonable, that if the foreigner is to benefit, he should pay for it to some extent at least. There would be no fear of his not sending the goods. He would be only too glad to pay the 5 per cent. (1s. in the £) which tariff reformers propose to charge him. Moreover, those who now wish and are content to buy at high expense the foreigners' early crops, could not reasonably object to or complain of this arrangement. They could not, moreover, even if the tariff resulted in their paying the 5 per cent. duty themselves. As in the case of the late registration duty on corn, however, we believe the foreigner would be the person

who would in the end pay this amount, and not the consumer.

Foreign competition, too, "hits" our early strawberry, asparagus, &c., growers, so many of whom are small holders depending mainly upon one or other of these crops. A well-known market gardener from the Worcestershire district, declared before the Royal Commission on Agriculture that foreign competition interferes not only with asparagus, as we have already suggested, but with radishes, lettuces, &c., to say nothing of the serious competition in apples. Market gardeners and small holders particularly, feel the depression in town trades more quickly than any class or classes in the kingdom, because directly a town working-man is on short time, his wife, who has to "draw in" in the way of expenses, stops purchasing all but the most necessary potatoes and cabbages, the purchase of fruit being out of the question. On the other hand, when trade is good, the artisan's wife indulges in extras, or "luxuries," just like the rest of us.

The larger occupier, that is to say, the farmer who goes in for dairying (whether milk selling, butter-making, or cheese-making); the grazier, or the farmer who fattens bullocks; or the farmer who does a little of both, will, it is clear, from what we have said, not only have the 5 per cent. tariff in his favour on foreign meat and dairy produce, but he will feed some or all of his stock at a cheaper rate, whilst his outlay on implements and appliances could not—were he to pay the

whole duty on them—be anything like as much as what he will save in his corn and cake bills. Even, therefore, supposing he makes no more money from the live stock which he sells (to say nothing of his other sales), he will be better off at the end of the year from the fact that he has fed his stock at a less cost. It is no small advantage to be able to say that; but it is a special satisfaction for us to be able to state that the small man will benefit even more proportionately to *his* holding with his varied crops.

Cost of Living.

There is only one other aspect—apart from the Imperial aspect—which needs for the moment consideration here, and that is, whether the cost of living to the large or small farmer, to the allotment holder, or to the agricultural labourer who has no allotment at all, will or will not be increased. Canada alone has over 300 million acres of the finest wheat-growing land in the world. The quantity of wheat required by the United Kingdom is 200 million bushels annually. If we assume that only 20 bushels per acre could be grown on the 300 million acres referred to (as against our 30 to 33 bushels per acre), then it follows that Canada alone could produce wheat sufficient to feed not only our existing population but a population thirty times as great as that now inhabiting the United Kingdom. Those who oppose Mr. Chamberlain never enlighten the electors on a fact such as this, when they talk about

his "wanting" to "raise the cost of living." And what Canada can do in the wheat (or bread) line she can do in the meat and dairy produce lines too. All such food is to come free. The same proposal applies, also, to every one of our Colonies and daughter States; and yet we are asked to believe that food will be "dearer"!

Mr. Chamberlain has himself said, on this point, that there will not be any increase in the cost of living. He has pledged his word to that extent. He has gone further, and promised to reduce the household bill for food and drink, so that, if by any chance the duties imposed by us on the foreigner were paid by the Britisher, he would take off the Britisher more than any such payment as that referred to. Such a statement and such a pledge will carry no conviction to a rabid political opponent; but it may be remembered, that none amongst the ranks of those who are so bitterly assailing that statesman have shown a tithe of the successful interest in the working-man, whether agricultural labourer or artisan, that he has shown, and this dates from a time even before he entered Parliament.

An Honourable Parliamentary Record.

It is well to look back on this matter for a moment, when his honour almost is challenged, and when his proposals are attacked in so unfair and bitter a manner. It is not difficult to appeal to facts. For example, it is now 15 or 16 years since the first general Allotments Act was placed upon the Statute Book. That Act should

have been passed by Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal Party of that period. They refused to pass this Allotments Act, although Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Jesse Collings had advocated throughout the country this and other rural reforms. Mr. Gladstone took advantage of the position. The advantage he took was to get into power over the labourers' backs, and then, without ceremony, to throw them over for Home Rule. If that abominable treatment of poor men stood alone, one might possibly forgive the Liberal Party; but the same politicians went again for Home Rule in 1892 instead of for the various social reforms required by the agricultural labouring and farming community.

It is not a matter for wonder that Mr. Chamberlain and others refused to trust the interests of the agricultural labourer to Lord Rosebery, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, and their Home Rule friends; and we are able to state that since the great "split" took place on the first Home Rule Bill, the rural population has secured more reforms and better reforms than have been secured in any similar period of our history.

It would take too long to mention the many magnificent Acts of Parliament of special interest to rural people which we have secured from the combined Unionist Party; but there are two Allotment Acts which, for the first time, enable any labouring man to apply for an acre of land, and give him compulsory powers by which he can obtain it; there is a Small Holdings Act, which, for the first time, enables

a man to buy land up to 50 acres in extent, mainly with the aid of public money; there is an Allotment and Cottage Gardens Compensation for Crops Act, which, for the first time, enables a poor man to claim compensation for the crops in his garden or on his allotment, when he leaves, or is turned out thereof; there is a Market Gardeners' Compensation Act, which, for the first time, secures market gardeners protection and compensation in their industry; there is the Free Education Act, which Mr. Chamberlain could never get Mr. Gladstone to pass, and which he secured from the Unionist Party; there is the Small Dwellings Acquisition Act, which enables working men, in town or country, to buy their own houses, mainly with public money; and there is the Workmen's Compensation (Agricultural Labourers') Act, which, for the first time, gives agricultural labourers compensation, in money, if injured in the course of their employment, and three years' wages or £150 to their dependents in case of death, &c. For these and other measures Mr. Chamberlain and the Unionists are directly responsible. These measures were not initiated by his opponents who now are so bitterly opposed to him. They had the chance to pass them when in office, but they refused or neglected to do so.

Perhaps, therefore, once again reviewing the foregoing, the agricultural labourer will feel disposed to judge Mr. Chamberlain by what he has actually done in Parliament in connection with social reform, rather than by what his political

opponents would like to have him believe he has done. For our part, we cannot help thinking, that sooner or later, the agricultural labourer—like the sensible and patriotic indivudual he is—will prefer to believe that it is better for us as a nation, to, so to speak, dig our own garden, rather than to allow our foreign neighbours to dig theirs, and then to dump the produce of it into our dwelling.

Better Wages and more Employment.

We have briefly indicated in the foregoing part of this chapter to what extent those who occupy land and who keep live stock would benefit by tariff reform; but we think a further word may be desirable—perhaps necessary—to indicate that not merely will great benefit accrue to each of those coming within the category referred to, but that the wages paid in the rural districts to agricultural labourers, are also certain to increase at the same time.

For instance, we have everywhere found that the labourer who looks after live stock for his employer is paid some two or three shillings, and in some cases more, per week than the labourer who does not have stock to attend to at all.

Now it stands to reason, that if an employer is able to feed his stock at a very considerably less rate, he will very likely increase his head of stock proportionately, or at any rate to such further extent as his farm will allow. In view of such increase, it is obvious that there must be required

more labour to cope with the increased employment, and it so happens that this labour is of the highest-paid class.

It is true, stock-men usually have more hours to work; inasmuch as their stock must be fed and otherwise looked after, not merely on week-days, but also on Sundays. We have, however, never found a labourer object to any such increase, provided he is paid in proportion; which is, of course, the present system. Accordingly, if the present system is to be extended to a considerable extent, as we maintain must result by the adoption of tariff reform, the agricultural labourers must feel the improvement by the increased employment of a better-paid character.

There used, too, to be a large number of flour mills in every county. These have largely fallen into desuetude, owing mainly to our importing the flour, instead of the whole wheat, and partly to the newer processes for abstracting the flour from the grain. We have it, however, on the authority of millers themselves, who have spoken to us, that if Mr. Chamberlain's proposals are adopted, there would be an enormous increase of work in the rural districts and connected with the milling industry. This, of course, means a further source of better-paid employment to the agricultural labourer and his sons.

Local Tradesmen Benefit.

It must, moreover, be borne in mind, that no such beneficial result can accrue without some

improvement in other directions, and it does not need a genius to predict or to perceive, that if the farmer is, on the one hand, improving his position, and a very large number of labourers in each county are, on the other hand, obtaining higher wages, the local tradesmen of every description will receive their share in the increased prosperity of their customers. The "general" agricultural labourer will be drawn upon for this better-paid work; and will manifestly be in a position sooner to avail himself of those Acts of Parliament passed for his benefit, Acts which enable working-men to get upon the soil on their own account, and in connection with which Mr. Chamberlain and the politicians with whom he is connected did so much to promote. It is the intention of those same politicians to still further assist the agricultural classes of this country, and not least, the agricultural labourers; and, as a testimony on this point, we need only mention the three Bills of the Right Honourable Jesse Collings, M.P., namely, a Bill to amend the Small Holdings Act, so as to make the Act more advantageous; a Bill to enable those farm tenants who desire to do so to purchase their holdings, on a much similar system to that which has already been created for and adopted by the Irish farm tenants; and a Bill enabling the children of labourers and those of other cultivators of the soil to secure a better education in those rural subjects with which in after life they are, as we all hope, to be more and more identified.

CHAPTER VI.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

We deal in this chapter with the objections to tariff reform which are commonly met with.

It is, however, as well that the public at large should remember that the question of preferential tariffs, which some assert would be of no advantage to agriculturists, has been particularly fully discussed by the Central Chamber of Agriculture, the most representative of agricultural bodies in this country. Two sittings were given to it, and eventually the following resolution was put to the meeting and carried by a very large majority against only seven dissentients:—

"That this Council considers that the time has come for the reconsideration and reform of our present fiscal system. It cordially welcomes the proposals submitted by Mr. Chamberlain as being necessary and desirable for such reform."

This resolution was agreed to on December 9th, 1903, since which time up to now our experience shows us that farmers have been and are in ever increasing numbers intent upon having preferential tariff reform.

Agricultural Education.

Undoubtedly, education is at the root of many successes in life; indeed, no industry can be carried on with the greatest success unless the education is of the most perfect kind.

Of what avail, however, is education, whether to a townsman or to a farmer, if, when he has obtained it he is driven out of the market by the foreigner? Education will not get one over the foreigner's tariff wall! If we want to send 1 cwt. of butter to France or to Germany, we must pay a stiff price to the authorities of either country for the privilege of being able to do so; but, if a farmer in either of these two countries —or any other country—wishes to send butter to our country he is allowed to do so. Our policy, in fact, at present is, "Let 'em all come," paupers and criminals as well.

The foreigner thus has his own market and ours in which to sell his butter, &c., whilst we have the British market alone. So long as a foreign farmer makes a good price at home in his own country, he can undersell the Britisher, and gradually wipe him out of existence. What applies to one British farmer applies to the whole lot; and yet we are asked by some queer people to look on whilst this process of gradual extinction is being accomplished. And we are told to look quietly on at it because the rest of England would benefit. Does anybody suppose that when our farmers are finally crushed out the foreign

produce will be sold at the same rates as now? Are foreigners devoid of cuteness, or is it not we ourselves who are devoid of that quality? Where comes in that "natural level" of prices (which Cobden wanted) when by an unnatural process the farmer is "robbed" of his own market here, and is not allowed by the "robbers" to enter theirs? It is certain that no British industry can stand for ever this form of "robbery" which the Cobdenites nowadays think is fair "competition."

Farm Better.

This is a favourite suggestion of some people, and doubtless it embodies a modicum of sense, inasmuch as most of us know land which could be farmed better than it is, or than it appears to be.

It is, however, worth while to hear what Sir John Lawes (the greatest British agricultural scientist and practical farmer) a few years since stated on this particular point, especially as his argument is, if anything, more valuable to-day than at the time it was uttered. He said:—"It is generally supposed, and has often been said, that the lower the prices of our agricultural crops, particularly of wheat and barley, we ought to grow more and more. Unfortunately, the result of all our experiments, which are very extensive, is that the reverse is the law. As you increase your crops so each bushel after a certain amount costs you more and more. There-

fore, if we had a famine in the land, and we could get a guinea a bushel for our wheat, we should try to grow the very utmost that is possible, but the lower it goes so we must contract our farming down to what I should call the average of the seasons. We have in this country very bad seasons, and very good seasons, and the mean of those is something like what we can grow, not more." "Then (he was asked) in your opinion a remedy is not to be found in higher cultivation, in the sense of putting more manure to the land?" "No, it is quite contrary to that, The last bushel always costs you more than all the others." "Then (he was further asked) I suppose, you would deduce from this that, in the corn districts, the higher the farmer has farmed his land in the sense of adding manure, the worse has been the financial result?" "Yes, quite so." Finally, he was asked, "Do you think that those farmers who have farmed on a very high system have probably lost more money than those who have farmed on a lower scale?" He replied, "I am afraid so."

The suggestion that we should "farm better" is one of those vague suggestions which simply do not stand enquiring into. If a man does farm better it is, generally speaking, of no avail, as the returns are not commensurate with the trouble and outlay. It is, however, as often as not quite impossible to "farm better," as the capital is wanting, labour is scarce (and, often not of the best), and prices, even where the farm-

ing is high, do not constitute a business return on one's outlay. We speak of arable or mixed farming, for milk-selling (which constitutes the bulk of the remaining farming) is already more or less a profitable business, employing, however, the least labour, as dairying must always do. "Farm better" is a maxim which may be applied to small holdings, the number of which in the national interest we desire to see largely increased; but it is not applicable to any general extent to the average farmer or to the farm lands of this country.

Railway Rates.

The question of railway rates is one which is being dealt with by the Board of Agriculture at the present time, and beyond saying that such is *prima facie* evidence that there is a case for enquiry, we need perhaps hardly take up much further space.

However, we feel that there is a preference given to foreign produce over that of British farmers, and we have been told this by growers on every hand. We are, moreover, of opinion that, in many cases, the charges of railway companies—apart from the preference indicated—are too high, and, in fact, more than "the traffic can bear," which, it is generally understood, is the idea which guides the companies in the making of their rates. Although the price of agricultural produce has fallen enormously between the last 20, 30 and 40 years, the railway rates

have certainly not fallen in anything like the same ratio, whilst in numerous cases they have increased; and, therefore, there seems to be a grievance, to the bottom of which we trust the Board of Agriculture will get. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that a slight reduction on the carriage of milk, or on that of other produce, would at the end of the year put the farmer in the position he ought to occupy, namely, one of fair competition all-round with the foreign producer. Much else clearly is required than a reduction in railway rates.

Rent.

We do not propose to argue the question "What is Rent?" because economists and philosophers appear upon this as upon other matters to differ exceedingly. Besides, we have already had something to say on the matter in Chapter II.

We suggest, however, that it is both commonsense and business (to say nothing of the morality of it) that a man—call him a landlord or what not—should receive a reasonable return on the money he has invested in the purchase of his land, and on the improvements he makes upon or to it. This return, if one likes, may be called "rent," or interest. The late Duke or Argyll regarded the soil as the landlord's manufacturing plant, whilst Professor Marshall has admitted that not only the soil of a new country resembles such plant, but that even in an old country like England, for example, it is quite often an "essen-

tial product," as essential in fact as the bricks from which are made the walls of one's dwelling-house. The latter authority adds that the soil "receives an income of heat and light and rain and air," and in the case of urban land "of advantages of situation, all of which are independent of man's efforts." It is, however, clear from this process of reasoning that if an owner of land, as Mr. Garnier has pointed out, "shares in the cost of production" by an expenditure of capital, he is entitled to a reasonable rent, and also "of the protection of the community." What a "reasonable" rent is may be left to the man who willingly takes land and to the man who willingly lets it, which is a common practice, we are glad to say, in this country.

Whatever rents are nowadays, it may certainly be said that they do not represent anything like such a return on the capital invested in the purchase and improvement of the land and buildings as would satisfy any manufacturer or any other trader or merchant on his outlay. We do not say that rents are not too high in some individual cases; but Sir James Caird, in 1886, estimated that there had been a fall of some 30 per cent. up to that time, whilst the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1897 reported that with some exceptions, chiefly in Wales, where remissions had been made instead, reductions in rent had been general, varying from 10 and 30 per cent. in the least distressed districts to, in the most distressed parts of England, 50 and in some

cases 70 to 80 per cent. We have not seen it suggested to what extent rents should come down except in general terms, but it seems to us that after all, this is a matter which can be best arranged between a willing tenant taking land from a man who has land which he willingly lets. At all events, the evidence goes to show that landlords have met their tenants—except in a few cases here and there—with liberality; and that for one case where rent has been maintained at an unreasonably high rate, it is easy to put fifty where it has been lowered to the satisfaction of the tenant, who even then is not able to earn a fair business profit. By the bye, we once heard (in 1903) a Liberal landowner and former member of Parliament, declare that he made a profit out of his cottage rents, and that he put up such rents, if possible, on every vacancy. We cannot recommend the policy, and we were surprised to hear it from one who persistently is talking about the "down trodden" and the "poor" and against tariff reformers. It struck us that a little generosity on his part would have been better.

Land Nationalisation.

It would be unjust to nationalise the land without compensation, and that contention has been admitted by John Stuart Mill, Henry George, and others; but directly such is admitted, and the compensation is enquired into, one finds that the compensation payable to the landowners for their land and for the improvements they have made upon it, is much more than any rent the landlords

either now get, or, so far as we can see, will in future receive for the land they own. Land Nationalisation, therefore, is but a theory and is unsuitable in a country like this, where the people still believe both in honesty and in the right of every man to make a reasonable profit from his work or from his investments.

We once heard of a labourer who had saved a few pounds and who went to a "socialist" meeting. The speaker was remarking how much each would receive if all the money and land were equally divided. The labourer turned to a fellow labourer and enquired "Eh! Bill, what did he say?" Bill replied, "He says that we shall all have £5 apiece if we go in for his policy." "To Hanover with him," the labourer emphatically observed, "I've £10 already, and I'll take d——— good care nobody has £5 of that!"

Directly a man obtains a few pounds, an allotment, a house, a small holding or what not, he has something he can call his own. The "magic of property" acts. It is essentially a healthy thing, and the man possessing it at once becomes a better citizen. Experience everywhere proves it to be so. He is not subject to those panics, sentimental or not, which seem periodically to overcome others not so fortunately situated as himself; and the legislation of recent years has been largely in the desired direction. What else can the Acts mean, nationally, which have been passed to put the labourer and artisan on to the land, and to enable him to possess his home?

Tenure and Improvements.

Other suggestions which have been made are that a farming tenant should have fixity of tenure, free sale of his improvements, and that there should be rents judicially fixed by a Land Court. The suggestions have been pretty constantly before the public for more years than we care to remember, but we may certainly add that the most impartial and practical farmers and others whom we have come across, have in the main certainly not asked for "judicial" rents, whilst as regards fixity of tenure some of the most strenuous advocates of this have come to urge that it is not required where free sale of a tenant's improvements are allowed to such tenant. The Royal Commission on Agriculture came to the conclusion that not one of the three propositions was desirable in the interests of agriculture.

With regard, however, to the free sale of improvements which is perhaps the most important of the three items, matters have been considerably ameliorated by the passing of the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1900, and there is no reason to suppose that with further pressure, agriculturists would not secure a further amendment of this Act should they generally desire it. No such amendment, however, could by any stretch of reasoning enable farmers to compete with the foreigner under our present absurd fiscal conditions.

Small Holdings.

A sufficient remedy for agricultural depression is, we are told, to adopt the small holdings system; and here, fortunately, we have had a somewhat unique experience.

There is no stronger advocate of the small holdings system than the writer who, under the auspices of the Rural Labourers' League, of which he is Secretary, and of which the Right Honourable Jesse Collings, M.P., is the President, has assisted working men to take advantage of the Acts passed for their benefit. These Acts are the Allotments Extension Act, 1882, the Allotments Acts, 1887 and 1890, the Local Government Act, 1894, and the Small Holdings Act, 1892. It is not likely, therefore, that we should altogether adversely criticise the small holdings system.

When, however, we are asked to cut up all our large farms and to make them into small holdings, we say the thing is both impracticable and undesirable.

It is impracticable because, in the first place, we have not the population to immediately put on such holdings, and landowners have not the money to erect the necessary huge increase of farm buildings which would be required; and, in the second place, a good deal of the land in most counties in England is, on the score of its distance from a station and its quality, unsuitable for the successful conduct of small holdings.

It is undesirable, because after all, it is to the holders of larger farms to whom we must look (and to whom in the past we have looked) for those big outlays of capital in the production of the best horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs, and in the adoption of the most improved implements and appliances for the most economic cultivation of those lands unsuitable for small holdings. Such farmers are standing examples to all the smaller men around them, and their influence, both on farming and other grounds, is, and should be, of a most beneficent character.

We wish, however, it to be clearly understood that we are a thorough believer in the small holdings system, and that we should like to see a considerable increase of small holdings in every county in England where the circumstances of the land, both as to its character and proximity to markets, &c., are suitable.

It should be consoling for tariff reformers to reflect that if we had a huge increase in small holdings, the cultivators of them here, as abroad, would take precious good care that they had tariff reform, because to them tariff reform would be of special utility.

Co-operation.

How far co-operation can improve the position of the agriculturist is a question that does not admit, so far as it concerns English and Scotch farmers, of that easy answer which is sometimes given to it.

It is customary to point to the success which has attended the movement initiated by Sir Horace Plunkett and others, in Ireland, in proof of the fact that the same might be done upon this side of the Irish Channel.

As a matter of fact, what has been done? The Irish farmer has co-operated for the sale of milk, which is then, under his own auspices, converted into butter. Cheese-making is not carried on to any extent worth mentioning, although there seems no very apparent reason why it should not be. The Irish farmer has no opening for the sale of milk in the large towns of Ireland, and as a result he must and does convert the fluid into butter. On the other hand, the British farmer has a large and increasing sale for milk in the industrial centres of England, and experience has shown him that this is more profitable to him than to turn the milk into butter. He cannot be expected to make butter if it is less profitable than to sell milk. Cheese-making too, upon this side of the Channel, does not prove to the great majority of British farmers so attractive or so profitable as the sale of milk. Here again, therefore, he cannot be blamed for choosing to sell his milk instead of to make it into cheese if he secures more profit by the former, and (as he does) a more certain trade.

It may be urged, however, that he should co-operate for the sale of his milk. Now this particular co-operation, so far as the public is concerned, might have a very unfortunate effect, as,

directly the farmer is master by co-operation of the situation, he would be in a position to pop up the price of milk in our large centres, at which there would be an immediate outcry, and the farmers would be told they were indulging in a monopoly in a necessary article of food. Farmers, however, do not adopt this attitude as a rule, although there is certainly a tendency (with which we cordially sympathise) to combine both for the sale of their milk and for other purposes, such as, for example, for the purchase of manure, seeds, and implements. Nevertheless, it is quite open to question whether co-operation on any large or national scale, even for milk-selling, would, amongst our farmers, be preferable to the system of individual selling to companies or to large dealers—a system they appear to prefer.

In the meantime, it is well that the public should be told that the whole question has been thoroughly enquired into by the Central and Associated Chambers of Agriculture. The conclusion, after a very exhaustive survey of co-operation as existing both in this and in other countries, was that co-operation for "purchase" and co-operation for "sale" formed two separate problems. This is precisely what we might have expected them to say. They add that the solution of the one is easy, whilst that of the other is extraordinarily difficult. In other words, it is no difficult thing for farmers to subscribe towards an association of their own, which association can obtain manures, seeds, and implements on more

or less beneficial terms by purchasing considerable quantities of them and selling the same to their own farmers. Such co-operative associations for "purchase" are increasing; but there is no reason whatever to suppose that, carried to the fullest extent, they would seriously ameliorate the condition of British farming, resulting, in the main, from low prices. When we come to co-operation for the purposes of "sale," the farmer is met with enormous difficulties, and effort after effort has failed in spite of the most careful and sustained labour. The Committee of the Central and Associated Chambers of Agriculture declared that nothing which came before them led them to believe that the profits of English farmers would be straightway increased by the adoption of any universal system of co-operation, "even supposing that the establishment of such a system were possible." It is well-known that many farmers are purchasers on a sufficiently large scale to be able to make practically as good terms as they would be able to obtain through an association; while many of the smaller farmers, especially near large centres of population, dispose of their produce direct to the consumers. The committee, however, thought that co-operation for sale might advantageously be adopted in particular districts for particular products; but this is very different from applying the principle generally to British farming. Were we a nation of small holders, as is Ireland and Denmark, co-operation would be comparatively a very easy

affair; and there is some hope, as small holdings extend, the system will be adopted.

If we wanted any further evidence of the difficulty attending the establishment in Great Britain of co-operation for the sale of milk, butter, or cheese, we should find it in the third Annual Report issued in June, 1904, of the Agricultural Organisation Society, for the year ending 1903. At this date there were 73 co-operative societies; but, of these, we are informed by the secretary, only nine sell milk, only four of them sell butter, and only two of them sell cheese.

Use Labour-Saving Implements.

It is said that our farmers should use labour-saving implements more, and that then they would produce food cheaper and solve the "scarcity of labour" difficulty.

Our experience is that farmers are more and more adopting the policy, but that even then they cannot make farming a successful and safe business.

It is, however, well to look back a bit, when the farmer is being severely criticised for his want of progress in this particular direction.

We shall show that there has been an increasing trend in the direction of using new and improved implements.*

The thump of the flail could once be heard in every hamlet, and almost from every farmstead. There were a few horse threshing-machines on the largest farms, but they were

* *The Rural World.*

mostly constructed of wood and exceedingly cumbrous. Moreover, those who had them often feared to make much use of them, the labourers of those days entertaining very universally the notion that all kinds of machinery took bread out of the mouths of the poor, and hence it was no harm to disable or even to destroy it whenever opportunity served. During the agrarian riots of 1832 the spite of the mobs was chiefly wreaked against farmers who had threshing-machines; and, if they could reach their barns before the yeomanry came the machines were broken to pieces and burnt. An easier way was, however, that of igniting the barn itself, and incendiary fires on farms were rife in the troubled period of 1848.

Wheat was mostly sown broadcast. Summer fallows were general in those days, and often in October they were, even in clay, fine tilth at sowing time. The seed corn was then ploughed in, but, when a clover layer or piece of bean stubble, the land was ploughed, if possible, a fortnight before being sown. The wheat was sown broadcast on the furrows, and the staler they were the better they could be worked down by the harrows for burying the seed corn. Both ploughs and harrows were of exceedingly rough construction, the handiwork of hedgeside carpenters and village smiths. A farmer's stock of field implements was seldom more than two or three ploughs with cast-iron turnfarrows, a heavy pair of harrows, tined drags, and a light pair, besides a

wooden roller, a tree truck fitted with a frame with shafts for the horse. Sometimes the wheat was dibbled, which was a far better way of putting it in than the above; and as about a bushel of wheat was saved in the seeding, the value of this when worth 7s. paid for the labour, and recuperative employment was found for surplus hands when there were too many of them. A field or breadth having been ploughed, a man armed with a dibber in each hand would walk backwards on two furrows, striking holes in them as he went, while a woman or lad followed to drop a corn or oftener two corns into each hole. The wheat plant always came up strong and vigorous after the surface consolidation by the tread of human feet, and, if performed early in the season, autumn tillering was the result. Beans were often dibbled similarly, but bean-planting by field women was the more general custom. A company of perhaps half a dozen women were often to be seen on a black February or March morning, each with an open-mouthed bag containing the seed beans suspended to her waist, and she would strike holes with a short dirk held in the right hand, and drop beans into them after taking them out of the bag with her left hand. Truly it was back-aching work for the poor women, who had to perform it stooping, with heads nearly down to the ground all day.

Perhaps, it will be asked, why did not farmers drill their beans? The corn drills of that time were cumbrous, requiring four horses to draw

them through a stiff bit of loam or clay land, and there was a still more potent reason why they were not used for beans. The cups that revolved in the seed barrels were not big enough to hold the large horse beans, although they could be made to act tolerably well in taking up the tick beans.

Treating of drilling-machines, what an advantage the modern light-made ones—mostly constructed with cast-steel instead of cast-iron and wood—confer on farmers able to avail themselves of them. The old Suffolk drill not only required four horses to actuate it, but a man and a boy to drive them, another man walking behind the drill to manage it. A modern one of equal width, stronger, although of such light draught, only requires a pair of horses which can be driven by reins held by the drillman.

If we may here exclaim, "Look on this picture, and on that," in regard to drilling, the exclamation would be still more effective applied to ploughing as once done, and now often effected by farmers who can afford to have gang ploughs. These are virtually ploughing machines, for they have seats at the back for the ploughman, who rides instead of walks. But the man has to drive three horses with reins placed abreast, to draw the machine as well as manage it, and when the land is level and works well, an acre per horse has often been turned over per day. What a contrast to the state of things in the old days, when the same number of horses driven in a

string only ploughed a single acre between them per day, and two men, and sometimes a boy in addition, were required.

The advantage of the farmer having one or two of these ploughs to fall back upon in a busy time when the season is late, and he is likely to lose it altogether, is even greater than the actual saving of labour in less men and horses being required.

This is the reason of the steam cultivator being invaluable when the farmer behind with cropping is able to get it.

Certainly there is the same great gain with the self-binding reaper which did not exist in our youth. Two horses driven with reins by a man seated behind, who also manages the machine, will cut and tie into sheaves as much corn as twenty men could do by hand-reaping, according to the slow process of effecting it in olden times. The standing wheat then often got to be "goose-necked," and the corns in the ears became very horny before sufficient hands could be obtained to deal with it, and there were also frequently spoiling crops of grass awaiting the scythe.

Our modern labour-saving implements, too, cause farmers to harvest their crops in less time, and thus perform invaluable service. For instance, grass-cutting can be delayed in a stormy, unsettled period with greater impunity under the certainty that when the skies become more cloudless the mowing machine can be set going from early dawn until sunset with two relays of

horses, and, with a good harvesting machine kept continually on the move stirring the drying fodder, large quantities can readily be dried without the old tedious process of repeatedly turning it with the hand, pick, or fork having to be resorted to. The horse-rake will also draw the fodder when conditioned enough into big rollers, and although the mechanical contrivance for gathering the hay up and depositing it on the waggon as the latter is drawn forward has not been worked much as yet, most likely any obstacles to its perfect success will soon be removed. For placing fodder on the stack the elevators of the different makers do their work admirably, and save some of the severest of muscular toil.

Horse-hoes, no less than corn and seed drills, are now very skilfully constructed compared to what they were in the forties and fifties. Not uncommon is it to find a steerage horse-hoe nicely fitted with tines so as to stir perfectly the intervals of the rows of a crop of wheat, oats, and even barley. The seed corn should, of course, be drilled a little wider than the original ordinary width, still not more than 10 or 12 inches, and we have seen the object well carried out with 9 inches intervals when the steerage hoe has been of the same width as the drill.

Both sheep-shearing machines and cow-milking apparatus have given good account of themselves at trials, sufficiently to win the Royal Agricultural Society's medals. Both are urgently re-

quired, as shearing and milking demand much labour, in all probability still more difficult to be obtained in future. In olden times the farmers' sons used to co-operate together for shearing purposes, and by having the shear days of the different farms of the locality on separate days they helped one another in turn, and combined festivity and pastime with the arduous work. The custom has long since, however, fallen into abeyance. Travelling gangs have for some years past been accustomed to visit farms, and perform the shearings at a fixed price per score or hundred sheep. But even this resource is likely enough to fail ultimately owing to the scarcity of labour difficulty, and if it does seriously, clipping power-driven machines will become indispensable.

But both these and the cow-milking machines are far too costly for middle-class farmers to buy, nor could any but large arable farmers find it worth while, even if they had the money available, to possess themselves of self-binding reapers merely to work for a few days, and then to be laid by for the remainder of the year.

Still, it is clear that not only have there been immense improvements in agricultural appliances, but that farmers have shown no particular laxity in adopting such of them as they could adopt. Those, therefore, who are so much in the habit of regarding the farmer as non-progressive in this, as in other matters, would do well to be sure of their facts.

CHAPTER VII.

RATES AND TAXES.

Anybody who knows anything at all about the question of rates and taxes in country districts knows that realty—that is to say, lands and houses—bears a much larger share of taxation than personalty; and he also knows that many charges now thrown upon the local ratepayer are of Imperial concern, and therefore ought to be thrown equally upon both personalty and realty, and not upon one class of property—namely, realty. At the present time, however, there is indication of some interest being shown in the whole question; and in a volume dealing with agriculture and tariff reform it is perhaps right to urge that agriculturists are still dissatisfied with the system of rating and taxing which (since all protection from Cobden's time has been denied them) has, with lowering prices and foreign competition been most unfair and exceedingly hard upon them. There are some who altogether deny that the owner and occupier of land are overburdened in the matter. It is partly to combat this that in tracing the modern history of the subject we venture to place a few

observations before the public, which distinctly go to show that Liberals as well as Conservatives really stand committed to reform in the matter.

So far back as May, 1868, Sir Massey Lopes moved in Parliament a motion to the effect that it was neither just nor politic that the local charges on real property, which had been constantly increasing, should be levied exclusively from such description of property. In March, 1869, Sir Massey Lopes again brought forward the question, and asked for a Royal Commission to enquire into the incidence and effect of local taxation. Mr. Gladstone was not willing to appoint this, although he did promise that the whole subject should be taken in hand as soon as the Irish Church Disestablishment question was got rid of, and it was on this understanding that the motion for the Commission was withdrawn. In February, 1870, Mr. Goschen appointed a Select Committee, whose enquiries, however, were somewhat restricted, as, instead of enquiring into the incidence of local rates, it rather sought to ascertain the mode of collecting them—a very different thing. One thing, however, which this Committee did was to recommend that whilst occupiers should be held responsible for a certain proportion of the rates, the general incidence of taxation ought to be taken into account before any such division of rates could be made. In February, 1871, Sir Massey Lopes again came forward with a motion seeking to ascertain the incidence of Imperial as well as

local taxation, and to impose that every description of property should equitably contribute to all national burdens. Mr. Gladstone resisted this, and his Government carried the day by 241 to 195 votes, on his undertaking, however, at once to produce a comprehensive measure of his own. On April 16, 1872, Sir Massey Lopes, although opposed by the Government, carried a motion by 259 to 159 votes declaring that no legislation with reference to local taxation would be satisfactory which did not provide either in whole or in part for the relief of occupiers and owners in counties and boroughs from charges imposed upon ratepayers for the administration of justice, police, and lunatics; the expenditure for such purposes being almost independent of local control. The motion, although carried, was ignored by the Government of the day, a most unjust proceeding. In 1874, the year after the General Election, Mr. Gladstone, in his election address, made special reference to the question of local taxation. He promised that the relief of the ratepayers from exceptional burdens would be the foremost item in his future financial policy. Mr. Gladstone, however, did not get into power at such election; but Mr. Disraeli declared that "a system of raising taxation for general purposes from one particular kind of property involves as great a violation of justice as can well be conceived." Hereupon Sir Stafford Northcote, in his Budget, made provision for the relief of ratepayers in respect of the charges borne

for police and pauper lunatics, and this, with the transfer of the charge for prisons to the Imperial Exchequer, relieved the ratepayers to the extent of almost £2,000,000 per annum. In 1878 a Highways Bill was passed, by which the area of charge for a portion of the cost of main roads was extended, although it did not remedy the defect whereby the cost of road maintenance falls largely on other than those who use the roads most constantly. Prior to the General Election of 1880 the question of local taxation was brought prominently before the Duke of Richmond's Commission on Agricultural Depression.

That Commission reported against the unfair exemption of personal property from taxation, and it recommended, as a practical means of relief, that the cost of the maintenance of indoor paupers, instead of being paid by a union rate upon real property alone, should in future be defrayed either out of the Consolidated Fund or by a rate or tax equitably adjusted, according to means of subsistence; in other words, upon the personal as well as the real property of counties, or of areas wider than existing unions.

Pledges.

It also reported that a certain proportion of local taxes should be assigned to the local authority in aid of local expenditure. On the 28th March, 1881, a motion was lost in the House of Commons by only fourteen votes, declaring

that it was "expedient to amend the Highways Acts of 1878, so that part of the maintenance of roads may be defrayed out of other sources than the county rate." In 1882 the Queen's Speech contained the assurance that Parliament would be invited in connection with local government reform to consider "the proper extent and the more equitable and provident form of contribution from Imperial taxes in relief of local charges." As apparently no steps were going to be taken to put this assurance into effect, Mr. (afterwards Sir Richard) Paget brought forward a resolution on the subject. He was defeated by 110 to 105 votes. Three days later it was proposed to move "for relief to ratepayers from the present incidence of rates for the maintenance of main roads." Mr. Gladstone, who, of course, noted the close division on Sir Richard Paget's motion, acted wisely. He urgently appealed to the member who was going to move the motion in question; and, on certain explicit assurances, it was not brought forward. The explicit assurances resulted in a grant being made of £250,000 a year for main roads. On April 17th, 1883, in consequence of the failure of the Government to redeem their promise to deal with local taxation and local government reform, Mr. Albert Pell brought the question forward, and in a House of 450 members he was only defeated by twelve votes on an amendment moved by Mr. Albert Grey. Mr. Gladstone was immediately approached by thirty-one supporters of his Government, who

stated that they only opposed Mr. Pell because they had full confidence that he (Mr. Gladstone) regarded the whole question as "really urgent." On March 28th, 1884, however, as no proposals were offered to meet the difficulty, Mr. Pell again moved a resolution deprecating "the postponement of further measures of relief acknowledged to be due to ratepayers in counties and boroughs in respect of local charges imposed on them for national services." This motion was carried against the Government by 208 votes to 197, but, as in the case of twelve years previously in Mr. Gladstone's Administration, compliance with the expressed desire of Parliament was once more refused. In Mr. Childers' Budget speech of this year (1884) an undertaking was given that the consideration of proposals for increased charges on real estate by way of death duties should be entered on only in conjunction with the readjustment of local burdens. But the Budget of 1885 contemptuously violated Mr. Childers' undertaking. It was proposed by such Budget to place an additional tax upon real property. Accordingly, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach challenged the second reading of the Customs and Inland Revenue Bill. His motion, besides censuring other financial proposals in the Budget, "declined to impose fresh taxes on real property until effect had been given to the resolutions of 17th April, 1883, and of 28th March, 1884, by which it had been acknowledged further measures of relief were due to the ratepayers in counties and boroughs

in respect of local charges imposed on them for national services." This motion was carried against the Government, and Mr. Gladstone immediately resigned. He thus left office in 1885, as he had done in 1874, without having made any serious attempt to redeem the promises repeatedly made to reform the incidence of local taxation.

Efforts at Relief.

In 1887 the Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his Budget speech, recognised the peculiar pressure of certain local taxes in the country districts for objects of common interest, and announced that the Government would double the subvention previously granted for main roads. Accordingly, a further transfer in aid of roads out of the general taxation of the country, of the sum of £280,000 for England, Wales, and Scotland was made. In 1888, by financial arrangements then effected, the exceptional pressure of local rates on owners and occupiers of land and houses in England and Wales was lightened by a sum of over £2,000,000. The relief was procured—(A) by the allocation to local purposes of a direct tax on personalty, being one-half of so much of the probate duty as is levied in England; (B) by the transfer of certain locally-collected licences formerly paid to the Treasury. The amounts under "A" and "B" for the year came to £4,876,000, but out of this sum the county councils then established were to provide for the pay-

ment of certain subventions formerly granted by the Treasury, but then and now withdrawn, leaving a balance of some £2,000,000 in favour of the local people. It was also intended by the Excise Duties (Local Purposes) Bill to provide further relief to ratepayers in town and country by a new duty on horses, heavy carts, and vans. The amount originally estimated to be derived from this source was £830,000; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer, through popular outcry, had to make certain concessions in favour of the opponents of the wheel tax, this concession reducing the estimated relief to somewhat over £700,000. This £700,000 would have been practically equal to three-fourths of the cost of the maintenance of main roads, or say equivalent to the loss sustained by local ratepayers from the abolition of turnpike roads. So much resistance, however, was offered by those who, it was declared, would have been affected by the proposed new duty under the Bill, that the Bill had to be withdrawn. In 1890 the liability of the general taxpayer (and thereby of all kinds of property) for objects of national importance was again distinctly admitted by contributions from the National Exchequer for police superannuation and for the extinction of pleuro-pneumonia. In the Budget of this year, moreover, by the imposition of the surtax for local purposes of 6d. per gallon on spirits, and by the transfer of a part of the beer duty, amounting to 3d. per gallon, a sum estimated to produce £1,043,000 in England and Wales was raised and apportioned to local authorities.

Of this amount, however, a sum of £650,000, namely, £300,000 for police superannuation, and £350,000 for the extinction of licences, was to be allocated for these two particular and specific purposes. The "residue," £393,000, was to go in relief of local taxation generally. The Government, however, withdrew that portion of the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Bill which had reference to the licences, and the £350,000 was therefore added to the "residue" referred to, which allowed of a sum of £743,000 being placed at the disposal of local authorities. No directions were given in the Bill as to how the local authorities were to use the money, though permission was given to apply it towards technical education purposes; and from then up till now it has been chiefly used each year for such purposes.

The Death Duties.

By the Local Government Act of 1894 no further direct liability was thrown upon the local ratepayer, although the parish councils created under the Act have in carrying it out increased the local rates considerably. But the year 1894 will be memorable in the history of possessors of real property, for it was in this year that Sir Wiliam Harcourt passed his famous Budget imposing the death duties. It has been the favourite cry of those who want to tax landed property more largely that the reason for doing so was because land was exempt from those duties which personalty pays when the owner of the personalty dies. On the other hand, the oppon-

ents of such a doctrine state that there never was any reasonable ground for such a contention, as any slight advantage which was obtained by real property in regard to the death duties was more than counter-balanced by its assessment on gross income to Schedule A of the Income Tax. It is true, they argue, that this was to a certain extent remedied by Sir William Harcourt in his Budget, which allowed of the deduction of one-eighth from the gross rental in the case of land, and of one-sixth in the case of house property, but this scale of deduction is, in the case of well-managed estates, entirely insufficient to meet the justice of the case. But inasmuch as it was said the Finance Act would equalise the Imperial taxation of real and personal property, let us give an instance showing that this is scarcely the case, and how hard it presses on the owner of landed property. For instance, suppose a man has £100,000 in Consols. He has only to sell a portion of this money to meet the death duties. But suppose a landowner's property is estimated to be worth £100,000: how can *he* meet the death duties? If he sell a portion of his property to meet them he depreciates the whole. To retain the whole property, his income must be crippled, and the estate itself be less well administered. It must always be borne in mind, as Sir Richard Paget rightly declared, that on well-managed estates the income over and above what is required for the management of them is comparatively very little in these days. If a man has a fortune besides his landed property, matters are different;

but, generally speaking, owners of land have not such a fortune.

Since 1894 we have had the Education Act of 1902, which has increased the local rates, and we have had the Agricultural Rates Act, which expires in March of 1906. Under the last the occupier of agricultural land is liable in the case of certain rates, including the Poor Rate, to pay one-half only of the rate in the pound payable in respect of buildings and hereditaments. Whilst one of these two Acts has thrown a burden upon ratepayers, the other has proved a relief. It would be a grave mistake, however, for anyone to suppose that the relief meets the justice of the case, and perhaps we cannot do better than to point out in this connection that the Council of the Central and Associated Chambers of Agriculture have on more than one occasion (the last being in 1903) informed the public, and particularly the Government of the day, that "pending the readjustment of the unfair incidence of local taxation" they (the Council in question) are "of opinion that the Agricultural Rates Act should be continued."

We have by no means exhausted the claims which may be put in by agriculturists for further considerable relief in the system of raising money from them for public purposes, but we have said sufficient, we think, to show that the man who makes his living by the land is still mulcted in a most disproportionate fashion, and therefore to an extent which justice does not demand. It is, indeed, not very clear to the plain man why the

raw material—land—of the farmer should be rated, whilst the raw material of the manufacturer should go scot free. At all events although it is no doubt very difficult to adjust the taxes or rates which should be paid by personalty and realty, the attempt ought to be made. The difference between rates and taxes consists mainly in the fact that rates are raised directly by one method and solely on real property, while taxes are raised by a variety of methods, and both directly and indirectly on personal as well as real property. What should be aimed at is so to charge these various rates and taxes as that every citizen shall in proportion to his income be an equal bearer of them. It is manifestly unfair that Income Tax, which, in the case of trades and professions, is fairly levied on the net income received, should, in the case of land and houses be charged, with but a nominal deduction, on the gross rental. In the latter case a tax is paid on income which has not been received. Both parties in the State have admitted at various times that the real property element pays an unfair share of the national burden, and yet Sir William Harcourt, without any real compensating arrangement, inflicted a still further serious blow upon it. The farmer's outlay to-day on the upkeep of his farm is greater than before Cobden's agitation started; and yet he is subjected to infinitely greater competition and has none of the "natural protection" of distance which Cobden declared would always be at his disposal.

CHAPTER VII.

DENMARK: AND BRITISH DAIRY FARMING.

An Interesting "Commission."

The public will remember that when the Tariff Commission was appointed to consider the question of tariff reform, there was a tremendous outcry on the part of certain politicians who opposed Mr. Chamberlain because of his using the word "Commission." Of course, there is no reason why, when a body of gentlemen join together to make an enquiry, they should not, if they choose, use that term. At all events, the outcry was soon knocked on the head by the public recognising that there was really no reason to complain about the Commission at all.

It is interesting, however, to point out that the very men who were scolding Mr. Chamberlain have since taken a leaf out of his book, their endeavour being, we suppose, to check-mate his proceeding. This is very interesting, but, at the same time, bearing in mind what we have said in the above paragraph, it is also a little bit dishonest. A number of gentlemen joined forces and the name by which they called themselves was the "Scottish Commission" on "Agri-

culture in Denmark." This Commission started on Thursday, June 16th, 1903, from Scotland to Denmark. From enquiries which have been made, it appears that the money for paying the expenses of this "Scottish Commission" was provided by three prominent Members of Parliament and by a Scottish peer, all of whom are out-and-out opponents of Mr. Chamberlain's scheme of fiscal reform.

We say again that this is very interesting. What was the object? It has been said that Denmark is a free trade country, and that we in Great Britain ought to adopt the Danish agricultural co-operative system. The Commission, therefore, ostensibly went to make impartial enquiries on this joint matter; but, in view of its composition and party political origin, it is more than likely that it went with the very definite object of proving that Mr. Chamberlain's proposals for tariff reform are all wrong.

Now, we wish to state that Denmark is not a free trade country in the sense that England is. It is true that wheat, wool, and some other articles are allowed to enter Denmark free of duty; but it is equally true that cheese and a large number of other more or less manufactured articles have also to pay duties, and very stiff duties, too. It is monstrous, therefore, that we should be told that Denmark is a "free trade" country.

We are, however, told to copy the Danish people in their agriculture. What does that

mean? It means that the whole of this country must be cut up into small holdings, with the view of supplying ourselves with butter, &c. Now, readers are already aware that we are as strong advocates of small holdings on rational lines as anybody can possibly be; but we unhesitatingly say, in the first place, that in Great Britain we have not the population which could cultivate the small holdings, and, in the second place, that it is, after all, to the larger farmers, with plenty of capital, to whom we must look for the best improvements in our live stock and for the expenditure on the best class of machinery, which expenditure would result in keeping up the admittedly high character of British farming, and would be a lesson and of great advantage to the small holders whom we wish to see studded around such larger farms. We have ourselves travelled in Denmark, and have enquired there and elsewhere a great deal concerning that country; and, as a result, we are of opinion that we cannot apply the Danish system to England in the same extensive fashion as is common in Denmark. The Danish farmer, moreover, is mainly a butter producer, sending his milk to his co-operative creameries for the purpose; and he gets a price for the milk which is much lower than is already obtained by farmers in this country, who, without co-operation, sell it to town firms for *consumption as milk*. By all means let us increase the number of small holdings very much more than we see them at the present time, and we

will do all in our power to urge that upon Parliament and the country; but to say that we can stem the tide of agricultural depression in England by a wholesale adoption of the Danish system and at the same time can keep up our present absurd tariff arrangements (which are all in favour of the foreigner), is about as monstrous a proposition as any man or any Commission could possibly propose.

Look, however, a little further at Denmark. We find that the acreage of wheat has diminished from 140,350 acres in 1876 to 32,171 in 1901. Barley has also diminished in acreage, though rye has increased considerably, which latter fact goes to show that some of the people at any rate may eat rye bread instead of wheat bread. We have seen Danish small holders eating brown or black bread and fat of some sort (not butter fat) which would be refused by a British labourer. The acreage devoted to grass lands has also considerably increased in the same period, whilst the number of sheep has decreased by nearly 700,000 head. On the other hand, cattle (cows) have increased by some 400,000 head.

A study of Danish agriculture during the last twenty-five years or so in the light of official statistics, shows that there has been a diminution or a standing-still in the cultivation of such arable crops as wheat, barley, peas, beans, buckwheat; a reasonable increase in oats and potatoes; a considerable increase in roots and grass; a satisfactory increase in horses; a big increase in

milking cattle and of pigs; and a large decrease in sheep and lambs. This is precisely what one would expect in a country which for many years has been, and still is, devoting itself to the production of milk and butter. Her people would seem to still eat a large quantity of rye bread, and this proportion is on the increase if we may judge from the official figures showing the increase in the production of rye in Denmark. At any rate, an examination of the statistics shows that with a population of 2,497,000 in 1902, the importation of wheat in 1901 was only 577,094 bushels, or a little over four bushels per inhabitant. This means exactly half a quarter or some 240 lbs. of wheat per inhabitant per annum! And such is "Free Trade" in Denmark!

Again, it is interesting to note that whilst Germany, in 1901, sent goods to Denmark to the value of 147,497,000 kroner, we only sent goods to the value of 87,919,000 kroner; the United States, too, sending goods to the value of 86,911,000 kroner. *In 1891* the value of the States' exports to Denmark was only 19,434,000 kroner, ours being in the same year 69,032,000. Both Germany and the States have increased their export trade with Denmark, because, we imagine, they were able to say they would limit the trade of Denmark with their countries unless a mutually agreeable arrangement could be come to, which is surely what we ought also to do. A kroner is worth about 1s. 1d.

As to the export trade of Denmark with

foreign countries, free traders will find little encouragement from the official figures. For example, in 1901 Denmark exported to Germany goods to the value of 68,176,000 kroner, whilst ten years later the value was still only 68,181,000 kroner. The figures for France were at the two periods 2,373,000 and 640,000 kroner respectively; for Spain, 480,000 kroner and 6,000 kroner; each of which countries is a tariff country. In the case of the United Kingdom, Danish exports to us have gone up from 132,139,000 kroner in 1891 to 250,781,000 kroner in 1901; and there has been a large increase in her exports to Russia, which also adopts free trade for several imported articles of food.

It is apparent, therefore, from the figures just stated, that the prosperity of Denmark is due, not mainly to the fact that she is herself, in part, a free trade country, but to the fact that she has our huge free trade market in addition to her own to send her products to. If she had not got that she would not be as prosperous as she is, and if we had a tariff and preferential trade with our Colonies, she would undoubtedly do then as other Continental nations already do, namely, feed their own people and keep them going, both on the land and in the factory—which would be both a common-sense and wise policy to adopt. It is what France does, and it is what Germany does, with the result that both agriculturally and industrially they are prospering more rapidly

than we are, and with the further result that the average savings of the community are more per head than in our country.

It has also been claimed that Danish "free" trade has stopped emigration. If so, it has certainly not done so in England. As a matter of fact, however, we find that the emigration from Denmark varies considerably. In the year 1870 the total emigration was 3,526, whilst in 1901 it had increased to 4,657. During the last thirty years or more it cannot be claimed that the Danish system has really decreased emigration. In the seventies emigration varied from 1,581 to 3,525 persons; in the eighties from 3,436 to 10,422; and in the nineties up to 3,570, in 1900; whilst in 1901 it was 3,457. What is all the talk worth, therefore, about the Danish system and Danish "free" trade preventing emigration?

The Danish system may be good for a country which is practically without manufactures, and we congratulate the Danish people upon recognising that fact; but for any body of men to claim that it can be, or should be, applied to England, which is a country both of very considerable manufactures and of very considerable agriculture, is a pure phantasy.

Dairy Farming in England.

As to dairy farming in England, it should be generally known that it has made considerable strides during the last twenty to thirty years, although we still produce far less butter or cheese

than we should do, whilst the increase has been in the direction of the production of milk for sale in our towns. In the case of butter and cheese-making foreign competition has been severe, continuous, and increasing, so much so that only the best British product, whether of butter or of cheese, finds a really remunerative market, and even that of a limited character and at a reduced return as compared with former years. In the case of milk, dairy farmers at present are able to hold their own; although if the attempts of the French to send fresh milk to this country—attempts which have been made during the past three or four years—are continued and increased, we may expect that even in the milk trade large numbers of our farmers supplying the London and southern markets will be seriously affected. It is, of course, monstrous that we should allow foreign fresh milk to be sent to this country, produced under sanitary conditions over which we have no control, and to allow it to compete with the milk of the British dairy farmer, which farmer is subject to the most stringent control upon the part of our local authorities.

If dairy farming—or the production of milk for sale—has considerably increased, and if that is remunerative to the British farmer, we see no cause for special gratification, looking at matters from a national point of view. We are glad for the dairy farmer's sake that he has been able not only to hold up his head above water,

but to get even his shoulders above too, and that the class of dairy farmers has increased; but, looking at this matter from the national point of view, we are bound to say that dairy farming employs much less labour than arable farming, or than farms composed of a large proportion of arable and the rest of grass land. It is not the production of milk alone in this country that we desire; but also the production of meat and other food for the people. With this object in view it is with alarm rather than otherwise that we are witnesses of the constant increase in permanent pasture and dairy farming—a system of farming which, whilst of benefit to both the tenant and landowner, is the very opposite as compared with arable farming judging it from the national point of view. It may be urged that even dairy farmers require a proportion of arable land to grow roots for their cows. We admit it. Nevertheless, the fact remains that with the growth of dairying the acreage devoted to fattening cattle and to corn land diminishes, and we want meat and corn rather than milk; or, preferably, both. We should have both if we were but the sensible and practical people we are generally supposed to be. We may take it that for every 200 acres of arable land converted into pasture, there are four labourers displaced; in fact, it has been placed at a higher figure.* Moreover, the manure from dairy cows

* Five. See Duke of Bedford's remarkable book, *The Story of a Great Estate*, published by Mr. John Murray.

is much less valuable than that from store-fed oxen. Where cheese is made, and the whey is fed on the farm, the loss is doubtless less, and it is less still where butter only is sold, and the skim milk is used on the farm.*

However, even on a small but good dairy farm of, say, 100 acres, with 50 acres of arable land, at least one-sixth more cows could be kept than upon an entirely grass farm. In addition, a variety of foods could be provided which would be productive of a marked increase in the supply of the milk from the herd kept. The pigs, too, would be kept cheaper; and some help would be given to the poultry, the extra cost of labour, of horseflesh, and implements being far more than covered by the increased returns.† Tariff reform, would, by assisting the increase of arable land, benefit the farmer, labourer, and nation.

* *Dr. Fream, B. Sc., in "Elements of Agriculture," published under the auspices of the Royal Agricultural Society.*

† Professor J. Long, in *The Dairy Farm*, published by Collins & Co., Glasgow.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

It is not without some justifiable impatience that the average elector observes the nature of the great bulk of the opposition to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals.

There is apparently little opposition from the Conservative or Liberal Unionist sections of the joint Unionist Party; and what there is in this direction is almost entirely confined to opposition from members of Parliament, whilst it is much more than counterbalanced by the support received from important and non-official Conservatives and Liberals outside the mere party organisations. As to Liberal Unionists, there can be no doubt whatever, especially after the meetings which Mr. Chamberlain addressed at the Imperial Theatre, Westminster, and at the Royal Albert Hall, in July, 1904, that the rank and file are in favour of tariff reform. Those meetings were remarkable alike in their huge numbers, enthusiasm, and successful organisation.

The opposition to Mr. Chamberlain, however, resolves itself mainly into that emanating from Liberals. Let us again state that there are very many Liberal electors who have already come

over to Mr. Chamberlain's views; and that others are fast coming over.

Now we wish to say a few words regarding this Liberal opposition.

First of all, what are we to think of Lord Rosebery? His lordship, within two or three days of Mr. Chamberlain's first speech on preferential tariff reform (May, 1903), went to and addressed a Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, but at that time he neither condemned the proposed reform nor blessed it; in a word, he took a leaf out of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's book, and "sat on the fence." The reason, of course, was clear: he neither knew how the public would take the reform nor had he the courage himself to lead. Later on, when he saw that the section of the Liberal Party to which he does not belong was banning it, he came into line with that section; and the most we have ever got from this Imperial statesman since the reform was broached has been to admit that agriculture is "crippled," and that what the country needs is "repose." If agriculture is "crippled," the country expects statesmen of Lord Rosebery's eminence to show why or in what way it has been crippled, and what steps can be taken to ameliorate the position. As to "repose," we think His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, after his celebrated tour, more nearly hit the mark when he told all of us to "wake up." Mr. Chamberlain's is a noble response!

We do not forget other remarks by Lord Rose-

bery, which make his present position anything but logical. On April 4th, 1900, his lordship was not such an ardent advocate of free trade or free imports as he now appears to be. "Have they" (foreign nations), he asked, "realised what th free trade of the empire means to their mer chants? Why, we know in how many parts of the world—partly owing to our free trade and partly owing to our generous encouragement of other nations—their commerce has begun to push ours out." We prefer the Lord Rosebery of 1900, when preferential tariff reform was not on the carpet, and when he saw free trade was injuring us, to the Lord Rosebery of 1904, who in the latter year of grace seems afraid to stand to his guns in support of Mr. Chamberlain. Is it unfair to suppose that his opposition takes the character rather of party political opposition than that of a statesman who desires to raise the whole issue above mere party politics?

In the second place, what is the attitude of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, as representing the other wing of the Liberal Party? At Perth, in June, 1903, he told us that "there is about 30 per cent. of our population under-fed, on the verge of hunger. Thirty per cent. of 41 millions comes to something over 12 millions." In October of the same year, at Bolton, he declared that "the mass of trade increases, and the signs of well-being with it."

The two quoted statements (and others from the same source could be mentioned) are self-contradictory, and we venture to think that no

statesman of the rank of the Laird of Belmont Castle should have made them. They come, indeed, with a very bad grace from one who is constantly pointing out the supposed variation between Mr. Chamberlain's attitude of years ago and of to-day, and whose own attitudes during one and the self-same year are grievous even for well-wishers to behold! After a lapse of years, especially when the interval has been fraught with such busy experience as that which Mr. Chamberlain obtained at the Colonial Office, a man may reasonably be permitted to change his views. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, however, can have no such excuse; and the two things referred to when taken together, and considered also in the light of the other facts in this volume, go rather to show that there is need for reform.

Look at the attitude also of other Liberals of eminence. Sir E. J. Reed, in the *Times* of January 28th, 1904 said: "If we are refused free trade almost everywhere—as we certainly are—and are obliged to submit to regulated trade, why should we not ourselves take an active, intelligent, businesslike part in its regulation?" Mr. Asquith, however, the month before at Doncaster, with holy enthusiasm remarked: "Let us stick to our well-tried policy of free markets and an open door." Clearly there is some difference between these two gentlemen, both of whom are supposed to be, and are, intelligent Liberals.

Mr. Asquith, however, was somewhat pessi-

mistic at one time. For instance, at Leeds on November 24th, 1900, before tariff reform became the topic it now is, he remarked that, "In the international markets we are fighting for our trade with all our available strength"; and yet at Cinderford, on October 8th, 1903—after Mr. Chamberlain's proposals of that year had been placed before the public—he said that, "Taking the annual average of five years from 1896 to 1900, in the protected market of France the free trade United Kingdom sent 24 millions sterling of imports, as against 15 millions sterling from the protectionist country of Germany, whilst into the protected market of the United States of America the free trade United Kingdom sent 27 millions sterling, as against 16 millions from the protectionist Germany."

It is a little interesting to observe that in 1900 Mr. Asquith was in a pessimistic vein, and had every right to be so; and that in 1903 he is found in an exactly opposite vein. Did the fact that Mr. Chamberlain, in May, 1903, gave forth certain views on preferential tariff reform have anything to do with the Cinderford speech; and had the attitude which was then (and has ever since been) assumed more of a political origin and character than anything else; in other words, is it unreasonable to suppose that Mr. Asquith may have been, and is, only following the party game?

If we reflect upon the speeches of Lord Rosebery, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, etc.; if

we reflect upon the predictions of Mr. Cobden when he was asking the agricultural community to adopt his proposals—predictions which have all been falsified by the results of some 60 years' experience; and if we reflect upon the decline in our export trade to foreign nations, coupled as it is with a most satisfactory increase in our export trade to our Colonies and daughter States, we say again it is not without some "justifiable impatience" that the average elector regards the character of the great bulk of the opposition to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals. We suggest that this attitude is itself proof that there is a real necessity to at any rate reconsider our present fiscal position; and we would further suggest that if such is impartially done, we believe that the proposals will in some form or another be adopted.

The case for "reconsideration" of our fiscal position is immensely strengthened by a knowledge of the fact that the predictions of Mr. Cobden and his friends have been, as suggested, falsified by the results. The agricultural community were led to adopt his proposals because of the inducements he placed before them. The Cobden Club, too, by its patronage of certain publications which have also led the public astray, is morally bound to adopt a different attitude than that with which it is generally credited. We are glad to be able to state that one of the most respected members of that Club, and himself one of the most honest and capable of agricultural writers in this

country, has informed us that he has resigned his membership because he believes in reciprocity, and especialy in free trade within the empire. We hope and believe other resignations will follow.

It is surely hardly necessary to recapitulate many of the arguments for a reconsideration of our fiscal system, as it applies to agriculture. However, let it be remembered:—(1) That whilst our exports to our Colonies have enormously increased during recent years, our exports to foreign countries have decreased; (2) that the rural population has decreased by nearly 1,000,000 souls in 50 years; (3) that the area under wheat has decreased by 1,853,140 acres since 1866; (4) that the area under permanent pasture has nevertheless immensely increased, viz., by 5,785,681 acres in the same period; (5) that our farm live stock has decreased by 1,674,997 head since 1869, in spite of the great increase in our town populations; (6) that agricultural capital has enormously decreased; (7) that the prices of cereals, of meat, wool, and other farm products, have gone down from 30 per cent. to, in some cases, 40 per cent. and more; and (8) that whilst the position which agriculture occupies in the country is gradually getting worse and worse, the physique of the people, as judged by the report of the Director-General of the Army Medical Service, is in a very unsatisfactory condition. To all this it may be added that the emigration from this country to foreign lands is not only hugely

greater than it was fifty years ago, but that the expenditure on poor law relief is quite double, although the population has not doubled, and in spite of the enormous charitable agencies which have sprung into existence during the same period.

The average man who, after considering all these and other facts, will assert that our present fiscal system is the best for agriculture and its people, must either be a political partisan, whose conduct or attitude we do not care further to describe; or he must be wilfully unwilling to admit the natural deduction to be drawn from the facts of the situation.

If the case for the "reconsideration" of our present fiscal system is good, we think the case for preferential trade with our Colonies, dependencies, and daughter States no less good. We should hold this opinion even were the commercial benefits not likely to be all we believe they will prove to be; for we are of opinion that the Imperial aspect of this question is one which is deserving of adoption, even if we have to pay something for it. The consolidation of a people means unity; and unity means strength. The idea of the British Empire feeding and supporting itself—standing, as Mr. Chamberlain said at the Royal Albert Hall, four-square against the world—is something to live for, something to fight for. Assuredly, however, the British people are not wishful to enter into a family compact with the view of inflicting injury upon foreign nations.

We are not a people who by nature desire to quarrel. On the contrary, we desire peace. We are, however, a practical people; and we are beginning to see that foreign nations, whilst they are undermining us in our own home market—by fair means or foul—are in some cases likely before very long to be unable to supply us with the cheap food about which so many are most anxious. The United States, for instance, by the time our children are middle-aged or are old men, will, if the progress of that country goes on as of late years, have very little corn to spare for export purposes; and this, coupled with a declining export trade from ourselves to the States, to Germany, and to other foreign lands, is a fact which ought not to give Lord Rosebery or others "repose," but rather to cause them to see how we can turn our Colonies to account to feed our people, if for nothing else.

Perhaps, however, we cannot do better in closing these remarks than to quote the following extract from a leading article in a New York paper, the writer of which sees clearly enough what Mr. Chamberlain saw before him. The extract, and the other facts of the situation, make us wonder how it is that with such a splendid prospect before the British people, it should be necessary for any one of us even to argue the question of preferential trade with our Colonies at all; especially, too, when Cobden declared, when negotiating the reciprocity treaty with France in 1862, that "we cannot fight against

the world," and that "if France will not admit our goods free we must fight them with the same weapons" (*i.e.*, tariffs).

The quotation from the American paper to which we refer is as follows, and the paper it appeared in is the *New York Press* of October 9th, 1903:—

"We do not like Mr. Chamberlain's proposition. We do not like it because it strikes at our foreign trade, since Great Britain and the British possessions (Colonies and Dependencies) are our greatest, our richest and our best foreign customers, taking much more than half of our total foreign sales.

"But the man who does not see that Mr. Chamberlain's proposition is for the benefit of the British market, and the markets of British possessions, is a fool.

"He is a 'fool,' because it means to take away from us and others a rich gift of trade and commerce, and to keep it for British subjects at home or in British possessions.

"And the man who thinks that the people of Great Britain will not listen to Mr. Chamberlain's programme because it is one of Protection, so long scorned in the United Kingdom, is infatuated with a delusion that, wrapt in the contemplation of a fetich, ignores empty hands and gnawing stomachs.

"When the British trader can no longer sell his goods to foreigners, he will listen to any economic or fiscal proposition to gain him a market for them.

"When the British workman cannot get, or hold, employment because there is no sale as formerly for what he produces, he will do more than harken to Mr. Chamberlain's programme; he will vote for it and he will fight for it."

APPENDICES.

I.—THE COLONIES.

It will be instructive if we give the resolutions which were come to in 1902 in London by the Colonial Prime Ministers when they were over here discussing in Conference the matter of preferential trade.

Resolution :—

"1. That this Conference recognises that the principle of preferential trade between the United Kingdom and His Majesty's dominions beyond the seas would stimulate and facilitate mutual commercial intercourse, and would, by promoting the development of the resources and industries of the several parts, strengthen the Empire.

"2. That this Conference recognises that, in the present circumstances of the Colonies, it is not practicable to adopt a general system of Free Trade as between the Mother Country and the British dominions beyond the seas.

"3. That with a view, however, to promoting the increase of trade within the Empire, it is desirable that those Colonies which have not already adopted such a policy should, as far as their circumstances permit, give substantial preferential treatment to the products and manufactures of the United Kingdom.

"4. That the Prime Ministers of the Colonies respectfully urge on His Majesty's Government the expediency of granting in the United Kingdom preferential treatment to the products and manufactures of the Colonies, either by exemption from or reduction of duties now or hereafter imposed.

"5. That the Prime Ministers present at the Conference undertake to submit to their respective Governments at the earliest opportunity the principle of the resolution, and to request them to take such measures as may be necessary to give effect to it."

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The representatives of the Colonies are prepared to recommend to their respective Parliaments preferential treatment of British goods on the following lines:—

Canada:—The existing preference of 33⅓ per cent., and an additional preference on lists of selected articles:—

(*a*) By further reducing the duties in favour of the United Kingdom;

(*b*) By raising the duties against foreign imports;

(*c*) By imposing duties on certain foreign imports now on the free list.

Australia:—Preferential treatment, not yet defined as to nature or extent.

New Zealand:—A general preference by 10 per cent. all-round reduction of the present duty on British manufactured goods, or an equivalent

in respect of lists of selected articles on the lines proposed by Canada, namely:—

(*a*) By further reducing the duties in favour of the United Kingdom;

(*b*) By raising the duties against foreign imports;

(*c*) By imposing duties on certain foreign imports now on the free list.

The Cape and Natal:—A preference of 25 per cent. or its equivalent on dutiable goods other than specially-rated articles to be given by increasing the duties on foreign imports.

OTHER RESOLUTIONS.

The following resolutions were also passed:—

(1.) "That in all Government contracts, whether in the case of the Colonial or the Imperial Governments, it is desirable that, as far as practicable, the products of the Empire should be preferred to the products of foreign countries.

"With a view to promoting this result, it is suggested that where such contracts cannot be filled in the country in which the supplies are required, the fullest practicable notice of the requirements and of the conditions of tender should be given, both in the Colonies and the United Kingdom, and that this notice should be communicated through official channels, as well as through the Press."

Resolution:—

(2.) "That it is desirable that, in view of the great extension of foreign subsidies to shipping, the position of the mail services between different

parts of the Empire should be reviewed by the respective Governments.

"In all new contracts provisions should be inserted to prevent excessive freight charges, or any preference in favour of foreigners, and to ensure that such of the steamers as may be suitable shall be at the service of His Majesty's Government in war time as cruisers or transports."

Resolution:—

(3.) "That it is desirable that the attention of the Governments of the Colonies and the United Kingdom should be called to the present state of the navigation laws in the Empire, and in other countries, and to the advisability of refusing the privileges of coastwise trade, including trade between the Mother Country and its Colonies and Possessions, and between one Colony or Possession and another, to countries in which the corresponding trade is confined to ships of their own nationality, and also to the laws affecting shipping, with a view of seeing whether any other steps should be taken to promote Imperial trade in British vessels."

II.—THE RECENT CORN DUTIES.

When, in 1902, to provide funds for the South African war, a small duty was put upon all corn coming into our country, certain statesmen (for purely political reasons) loudly and insistently proclaimed:—(1) That the food of the people was being so taxed as to raise the price of bread, and (2) that the Government were trying

to bring about the state of things that existed before the repeal of the Corn Laws.

On these two points (which somewhat bear on the question of tariff reform) we have something to say. Taking the last one first, we would ask: What are the facts? Although the Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, a "registration" duty on corn and flour was retained for 23 years longer, and was only abolished in 1869. It was this registration duty which the Government in 1902 re-imposed. Mr. Gladstone re-modelled the duty in 1864, and then stated that it was retained because it was inconvenient to part with it. Mr. Sydney Buxton, a Radical Member of Parliament, refers, in a book he has written, to this duty as being a branch of revenue profitable in itself, collected with very little trouble, expense, or hindrance to trade, and "practically not affecting the price of food." Moreover, let it be remembered that the abolition of the registration duty in 1869 did not reduce the price of bread. Why, therefore, should its re-imposition raise the price of bread to-day? Nevertheless, it was taken off by the Budget of 1903, much to the annoyance of agriculturists and others of His Majesty's subjects, and without any corresponding advantage.

We come now to the second point, and again we ask: What are the facts? We went to some trouble at the time to ascertain them, and they constitute a complete exposure of the whole tribe of Little Englanders who trade too much on the

presumed ignorance of the public. For the purpose of making this statement short and clear, we give below a tabular statement which shews what the price of bread actually was for the six months ending on the 5th of August, 1902. This statement applies to the price of ordinary household bread in 24 of the large provincial towns in Great Britain and Ireland. Here it is:—

Place.	Price of 4 lbs. of Ordinary Household Bread at					
	1st March.	1st April.	5th May.	2nd June.	1st July.	5th Aug.
	d.	d.	d.	d.	d.	d.
Birmingham...	4½ & 5½	4½ & 5½	4½ & 5½	4½ & 5½	4½ & 5½	4½ & 5½
Bolton ...	4	4	4	4	4	4
Bristol ...	4½	4	5	5	5	5
Cardiff ...	3½	4½	5	5	5	5
Derby ...	5	5	5	5	5	5
Huddersfield	5	5	5	5	5	5
Hull	4 & 5	4 & 4	4 & 5	4 & 5	4 & 5	4
Ipswich ...	5	5½	5½	5½	5½	5½
Leicester ...	4½	4½	4½	4½	4½	4½
Liverpool ...	4	4	4	4	4	4
Manchester ...	4	4	4	4	4	4
Middlesbro' ...	5	5	5	5	5	5½
Newcastle-on-Tyne ...	5	5	5½	5½	5½	5½
Norwich ...	5	5	5	5	5	5
Nottingham ...	5	5	5	5	5	5
Oldham ...	4½	4½	4½	4½	4½	4½
Plymouth ...	5	5	5	5	5	5
Wolverhampton	5	5	5	5	5	5
Aberdeen ...	5	5	5	5	5	5
Dundee ...	5	5	5½	5½	5½	5½
Edinburgh ...	5½	5½	5½	5½	5½	5½
Glasgow ...	5	5	5	5	5	5
Belfast ...	4½	4½	5	5	5	5
Dublin ...	5½	5½	5½	5½	5½	5½

Now it is well known to all those who have anything to do with the production or the sale of wheat and flour, that for some little time before the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced his Budget of 1902 the price of these articles was on the increase, and accordingly that the price of bread went up. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach did not introduce his Budget until the middle of April, or, to be precise, on April 14th, 1902, and the table shows that in nineteen places out of the twenty-four enumerated there was not only no increase immediately following the introduction of the Budget, but that there was no increase up to the August. In only four cases was there an increase of a halfpenny the month following the Budget; whilst, in one case, the increase did not take place until August. We do not mean to say there was no increase in any other districts—because, of course, our enquiries were necessarily limited—but what we do say is, that in the largest towns in the country (where the effect, of course, of any duties would be soonest felt) the increase, as above shown, was practically non-existent. Does anybody really suppose that, whereas a 1s. duty per quarter on *all* corn sent us produced no effect, a 2s. duty on *foreign* corn to be sent us (with none at all on *Colonial* corn) is going to raise the price of bread here? If anyone supposes anything of the sort, it must surely be because his judgment and feelings are warped by political bias; inasmuch

as the most recent and satisfactory argument is quite against him, as indicated in the foregoing figures relating to the corn duties of 1902.

III.—MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND THE RURAL POPULATION.

We give below the first speech* which Mr. Chamberlain delivered before an agricultural audience in support of his proposals. That audience was the largest, of an agricultural character, ever got together under one roof to listen either to Mr. Chamberlain or to any other statesman or politician. It numbered between 10,000 and 12,000 persons, of whom a very large proportion were agricultural labourers. The foregoing part of this book was written before the speech was delivered. There is nothing, we think, in the latter, outside the proposals already discussed by us; but the rural public would—we venture to urge—*do well to read and to consider well Mr. Chamberlain's own words and to disbelieve absolutely the statements and opinions of his opponents where those statements and opinions conflict with the speech. The speech is the thing: and not what opponents say regarding it.*

Mr. Chamberlain, on rising to speak, had a great reception, the audience rising and cheering enthusiastically. When the cheering had subsided, Mr. Chamberlain said:—

"I am here to-day, as the chairman has told you, in pursuance of a promise made during the last autumn, that when I had placed my proposals for a change in our

*Speech delivered in the Duke of Portland's Riding School, Welbeck, on August 4th, 1904.

taxation before the populations of the great towns I would take the earliest and the most convenient opportunity of submitting them to an agricultural audience. (Cheers.) And now to-day, by the kindness of your chairman, there are gathered together in this hall a larger number of persons interested in agriculture and living by the cultivation of the soil than have ever been gathered before under one roof. (Cheers.) Before I sit down I hope to make clear to you what it is that I propose, and what will be the effect of my proposals upon those who have to gain their living by the cultivation of the land; but I should think I paid you a very poor compliment if I did not remember that you are not only farmers and labourers, but that you are also Britons (cheers), citizens (cheers) of a great Empire, and that I may as readily appeal to your patriotism and to your national sentiments as to those who live in the towns. (Cheers.)

"The first object that any statesman must have in proposing reform—his first object—must be the good of the country as a whole. (Cheers.) Nothing that interferes with that can properly be submitted to a British audience; and let me say that anything which is for the good of the country as a whole is good for all its parts. (Cheers.) You cannot confer a benefit upon the manufacturing population without helping forward the agricultural population at the same time. The artisans in the towns and the labourers in the villages are, after all, closely connected. They are the best customers one to another, and the benefit of one is the benefit of both. (Cheers.)

The General Position.

"Now what is the general position with which we have to deal? For 60 years we have been living under a system proposed to our fathers and grandfathers under totally different circumstances from those in which we live. This system was supported by promises which have never been fulfilled (cheers), and it has produced results which nobody anticipated. It seems to me that in these circumstances it is not unreasonable that we should ask that this system should be reconsidered. (Cheers.) What is it? We allow foreigners to send to us everything they make

and everything they grow (which we can make and grow) without asking from them a single penny of duty, without asking them to pay one farthing towards the expenses of the country; and at the same time these foreign nations which derive so much advantage from our generosity have refused to allow anything that we make or anything that we grow to come into their countries without paying a heavy and constantly increasing duty and a large contribution towards their expenditure. (Cheers.) Well, ladies and gentlemen, it seems to me that it is on the face of it a one-sided and unfair proposal. (Cheers.) The wonder is it has endured so long. There is, however, a reason for that, as there is for most things; and the reason is that for a long period after this system was adopted it did us no substantial harm. For a long period foreign nations had not sufficient capital, they had no skilled labour, they had not the machinery that would enable them to compete with us. During the 20 years after the introduction of our so called free trade the great development had not taken place in the agricultural industry abroad; the great West of America had not been cultivated; and there was no very large importation of foreign products into this country. All that has altered within the last 30 years; and within the last 30 years foreigners have gained what they wanted, viz., capital and skill and machinery. They have first been enabled to make for themselves all they wanted, and to shut us out of their markets; and then they have had a surplus which they have dumped into this country to the very great injury of our manufacturers and of our workpeople. (Cheers.) And what has been the result? The result has been that these foreign protected countries—Germany, France, the United States of America—have progressed much more quickly than we have. We have been falling into a back place, we have lost the supremacy which we previously enjoyed, and we have had to take up a secondary or even a third-rate position; with every prospect that if this system continues we shall sink into the position of a fifth-rate Power. As this progresses more and more, it is difficult for our farmers and our manufacturers to gain any profit and for our workmen and our labourers to find any employment. Well,

the Government has taken note of this state of things; and they propose to you a policy which is known as the policy of retaliation. They say in effect to the foreigner, 'If you will not allow us to send our goods free into your country, if you will not reduce or remove the taxation which you put upon them, we will impose taxation upon the goods that you make. (Cheers.) We are tired of keeping always the open door for you while you slam your door in our faces. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. (Cheers.) We will mete out to you the measure which you have meted to us, and, if we have to fight with you, to compete with you, we will compete with your weapons.' (Hear, hear.)

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen, that policy of the Government is a very good policy as far as it goes. ('Hear, hear,' and a laugh.) But where does agriculture come in? ('Hear, hear.') The policy will help the manufacturer of this country to recover and to maintain his position, but how does it help the farmer, and how does it help the labourer? Yet, if you look, it is the farmer and the labourer who have suffered more than any other classes from the system to which I have referred. (Cheers.) Now, it is important, in the first instance, to make this clear to you. I do not want in a great meeting like this to trouble you with many figures, but perhaps you will forgive me if I give you a few. Our opponents tell you that you have nothing to complain of. Mr. Morley, at Manchester, recently, said that owing to free trade the farmer was able to hold up his head, and that the labourer was in a superior position. I am very glad to hear it. I should be still more glad if it were true. (Loud laughter.) If that were the case I should not be wanted here. (Laughter and cheers.) If you are well you need not call in a doctor. ('Hear, hear.') But is it true? (Cries of 'No.') Are those the facts? In the last 30 years the acreage in corn in this country had lessened by three millions of acres, the green crops have lessened by three-quarters of a million; and much land has gone out of cultivation. What is of much more importance, an

enormous amount of land has passed from arable to pasture; and although that may not matter much to the farmer it matters a great deal to the labourer ('hear, hear'), because there is less labour required upon the land. The stock of the country has on the whole diminished by something like two millions of head; and the farmers' capital, according to Sir Robert Giffen, has diminished by something like 200 millions sterling. What is the consequence of all this? The consequence is that there has been less labour for the working man to do, and the number of people cultivating the land has decreased by 600,000 in the last 30 years; and if you go back for 50 years it has decreased by something like a million! What would you say if something of that kind was told you about any other business? If you were told that the returns had diminished, that the capital had been lost, and that the number of workpeople had been decreased, would you see in all that any evidence of great prosperity? I think you would be justified in saying that under such circumstances a change had become necessary. ('Hear, hear.') But that is not all. It is said that we enjoy a system of free trade. What is free trade intended to give to us? It was certainly not intended to produce the results to which I have referred! I have never, in the course of this discussion, said a word against the character of Mr. Cobden. ('Hear, hear.') Mr. Cobden was a very able man. I believe he was a very sincere and a very honest man. I believe he said what he thought to be true. But he was not infallible. (Cheers.) There never was a prophet who was more unfortunate in his predictions than Mr. Cobden. (Loud cheers.) Mr. Cobden promised that the repeal of the Corn Laws would stimulate the demand for agricultural labour. Has it done so? ('No.') It has thrown one-half of the agricultural labour of the country out of employment. He told you it would not throw 'a single acre' out of cultivation or lessen production by a single bushel; whereas the production of corn in this country at the present time is less by 60 millions of bushels. He said that the farmers' profits would not be affected; that the farmers would always get a fair price for their wheat. He did not 'anticipate' that it would fall below 45s. a

quarter; and that you would have a 'natural protection' of something like '10s. 6d. a quarter,' due to the cost of freight and transport from foreign countries. What are the facts? The 'natural protection' which was to take the place of legislative protection has disappeared; it does not amount now to more pence than Mr. Cobden thought it would shillings. The price of corn has gone down till it is about 26s. a quarter, at which price it cannot be produced at a profit. Mark this! At the same time, the price of bread has not fallen in anything like the same proportion.* (Cheers.) Now, in the face of facts which are quite different from those which were anticipated, is it not time to ask for a reconsideration of the scheme? ('Yes.') Are you not justified in claiming the same justice for your industry which the Government has promised for manufactures? Is it possible that either the farmer or the labourer can be satisfied with the existing state of things? As to the farmer, I am pretty well aware of what answer he will make. In April, 1902, a duty, a moderate duty of a shilling, was placed upon corn. It had no effect upon the price of bread. It could not be said to have given any substantial advantage to the farmer. But he welcomed it; and if he welcomed that, still more is he likely to welcome the much greater advantages that I promise to him. (Cheers.) I do not believe, however, that I have to preach to the farmer. It is rather to the labourer that I have to address myself.

The Labourer's Opportunity.

"And the first thing I say to him is this, that now, as never before, he is being consulted as to this matter. Free trade was carried into effect without any reference to the agricultural labourer. He had no vote. He was of no importance. Nobody thought it worth while to ask his opinion. But now he is in a different position. He has the vote; he can make his voice heard; he can carry elections in many counties. If he is not convinced, if I cannot convince him that what I am proposing is to his

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**Readers should particularly note that fact.*

benefit and advantage, then all I have to say is that the reform I propose cannot be successful; and, indeed, if it does not produce something to his advantage it ought not to be successful. (Cheers.) I say to you, then, in the first place, that I think that more than most men, I have some claim to be heard by you.* ('Hear, hear.') I have been 30 years in politics, and during the whole of that time I have had a special interest in the condition of the agricultural labourer (cheers); and I have taken that interest because, of all the working classes in the country, he is the least fortunate, because he in the general progress has gained less than any other class. I took an active part in securing for him the franchise; and when the franchise was obtained, I was happy enough to be able to secure the support of Lord Salisbury, who was then at the head of the Government. (Cheers.) Lord Salisbury gave to the agricultural labourer free education for his children. (Cheers.) Was that no small boon? Why, there must be many of you who remember that 20 years ago the agricultural labourer with a family might have to pay anything from 6d. to 1s. a week in order to secure that his children should be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. And now a good education has been placed within the reach of every child of every labourer without a farthing of cost to himself.† (Cheers.) Well then, the next thing we did—I say 'we' because it was with the approval and assistance of my friends, Mr. Chaplin (cheers) and Mr. Jesse Collings ('hear, hear'), and others who have always shown themselves to be friends of the labourers—it was with their assistance that we were enabled to obtain legislation which facilitated the acquisition of small holdings and allotments, and although the compulsory clauses of that legislation have not been frequently put into force, the result has been that at the present day 100,000 labourers at least have got allotments

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* *This is perfectly true. The Author has dealt with Mr. Chamberlain's honourable and successful record in another part af this book.*

† *The wives af agricultural labourers have told us—often with tears in their eyes—of what great value the Free Educa- Act has been in their respective homes.*

who never had allotments before.* (Cheers.) We have done more than that. We have secured for the holders of allotments protection for their improvements. Again, in the last few years we have obtained for the labourer compensation in the case of accidents connected with his employment. (Cheers.) Why do I remind you of all this? Not to boast of it, but to say that, while we had very little assistance from those Radicals who now ask for your votes, we have shown by our past history that we have some right to call ourselves friends of the labourers. (Loud cheers.) And it is as a friend of the labourer that I ask you to believe me when I say that if I thought the proposals I make to you would injure you in the slightest degree, if I did not believe, as I do believe, that of all classes in the community you are the people who have most to gain, I would never have proposed them. (Cheers.) I am not content to stop with the legislation of the past, and I do not ask for gratitude for what we have done; but I ask you, looking at the past, to believe me when I say that we have it in our power to do more for you in the future. (Cheers.) That is not, I submit, the position of our opponents. They seem to think that you are now in a position that is so satisfactory, so enviable, that any change would be for the worse (laughter), and they accuse me (of all men), they accuse me, of an infamous desire to deprive you of this 'splendid' position, and to throw you back upon the times of famine and of misery in which your ancestors were some 60 years ago!! Well, ladies and gentlemen, they have a poor opinion of your intelligence if they think you will believe that story. (Cheers). It is quite true that the condition of the labourer, and not only of the labourer, but of the artisan in the towns, was one of infinite distress in times of which we have been speaking. But why was it one of distress? That is a point to which I am going to call your attention.

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* *The Rural Labourers' League has itself (free of cost) helped over 14,000 men to secure allotments and small holdings; but the number, 100,000, might, in the author's opinion, be doubled. Mr. Chamberlain, however, as usual, errs on the side of accuracy.*

A Tax on Corn.

"My opponents say that I am going to reduce you to famine and starvation because I propose to put a tax of 2s. a quarter upon foreign (not Colonial) corn. I do propose to put on that tax. (Cheers.) But if you will listen to me, I think I can show you that it will not injure you in the slightest degree, and certainly it will not bring you back to times when the duty on corn was not 2s. a quarter, but 20s. and even more. I want, however, to show you—this is my statement, and I am going to prove it—that the cause of the misery from which your fathers and your grandfathers suffered was not the price of corn, *but the lack of employment and the lowness of wages* (cheers);* and the proof of that is that for 30 years after the Corn Laws were repealed there was no substantial decrease in the price of bread. The reason for the improvement in the condition of the agricultural labourer and the workman was not the reduction in the cost of his food, but the development of trade, which was brought about by the progress of invention and by the discovery of gold in Australia and America and which raised his wages and increased his employment. ('Hear, hear.') Now let me once more impress upon you the fact that those who try to induce you to believe that everything depends upon the price of corn are deceiving you. ('Hear, hear.') *What you have to find is employment* (cheers)—*plenty of employment and the best wages you can get for that employment.* (More cheers.) If you want an illustration, let me take it from two very different examples:—If the Radicals are right when they come and tell you that even a small increase in the price of your food would be ruinous to you, then the happiest countries in the world must be the countries where food is cheapest. And what countries are those? China (cheers)—China and India. (Renewed cheers.) Well, ladies and gentlemen, in China and India, although food is cheap, wages are only a few pence a day; and I should be very sorry to see any of you

* *This is a simple historic fact and capable of proof both from Cobden's speeches and other authorities, the public should bear it well in mind. It is a very important point in this controversy.*

emigrating to China or to India with any idea that you could better your position. (Cheers.) But then look at the other end of the scale—look at America. In America the price of food and the cost of living are higher than in England. I do not know how much higher—probably 10 or 20 per cent. But then, as the agricultural labourer in America has wages of 4s. or 5s. a day, he has a much larger margin than you have, and he is much better off. So that my point is this—and I beg you to consider it—namely, *what you have to do if you want to improve your position is to see what system, what policy, will give you most employment and most wages.* ('Hear, hear.') Now, has free trade given you more employment? (Cries of 'No.') No, it has driven from the land half the labourers who used to work upon the land, and where have they gone? They have gone to foreign countries, away from their homes and from the people whom they hold dear. They have gone into the towns, already overcrowded; into insanitary conditions; or, they have gone to the workhouse. ('Shame.')

Free Trade and Labourers' Wages.

"The effect of free trade upon the labourer of this country has been disastrous. (Cheers.) But has it raised your wages? Yes, to a certain extent the wages of the labourer have been raised. *But mark this—of all classes in the community, that of the agricultural labourers is the one in which wages have been raised least* ('Hear, hear'); *and that is the consequence of the system which I am condemning.* I see from the great Blue-Book which was published lately that, while the average wages for the five years ended 1902 in the case of all other industries had risen 17 per cent. above the wages 20 years ago, in the case of the agricultural labourer the increase was only 6 per cent.! ('Hear, hear.') Now, I ask the labourers, 'Is it worth your while to give your vote for a system under which you are still the worst paid labourers in the United Kingdom, and under which your rate of progress has only been one-third of that of other classes?' What about the future? If that is the record of the past, have you any reason to expect that you will be better off in the

future? *You cannot expect that your food will be cheaper.* I suppose we have got to about the bedrock level in regard to the price of food. *On the other hand, it may be much dearer.* If you depend upon *a single source of supply* for all that you cannot produce yourselves, you will create a monopoly, and a monopoly will probably end in a rise in price. And if there should be any drought in America, or any such speculation as that which took place a year or two ago, which raised the price of corn temporarily by 10s. a quarter—if that be the case, the labourer will be the first to suffer, and *to him it may mean great misery and great distress.* But if the price of your food is not likely to be lowered, *can you expect more employment?* No. Every day sees more land carried from arable to pasture, and every acre that is transferred means so many more labourers thrown out of employment. (Cheers.) *Can you expect more wages?* No; as long as the farmer can make no profit he cannot afford to pay you more wages (cheers); and, therefore, let me say that the interest of the labourer in this question is the interest of the farmer. (Hear, hear.) If the farmer and the labourer would work together they would have more influence than they have now; they would not be forgotten by the Government. (Cheers.) If the position of the labourer is to be improved, the position of the farmer must be improved with it; *and the real point, therefore, is, will the proposals that I make improve the condition of the farmer, and, under those circumstances, will the farmer be able to improve the condition of the labourer?* ('Yes.')

THE CHIEF PRODUCTS OF AGRICULTURE.

"Now, then, what are my proposals? Remember, I have only put them before you as a sort of sketch plan for the purpose of discussion and consideration. I do not ask you to pledge yourselves to them. They have been submitted to the consideration of the Tariff Commission, under the chairmanship of Mr. Chaplin (cheers), and it is quite possible that before they are finally settled they will undergo some changes and amendments; but I will take them as they are, as, at all events, a subject for discussion, and I will take them as illustrating the changes that are likely to take place. The general principle is

clear. I want to extend to agriculture the same advantages that the Government promised to manufactures. I want, in order to equalise the competition—or, at all events, to make it more nearly equal between the foreigner and ourselves—I want to put a moderate duty on the chief products of foreign agriculture as well as on the chief products of foreign manufacture—(cheers); and I want to arrange this moderate taxation so that, without pressing upon any class in the community, it may give the greatest advantage to the farmer in regard to those branches of his industry which are at the present time most profitable and most capable of development. I propose to put a 2s. duty on foreign corn. (Cheers.) I do not believe—I speak to you frankly—I do not believe that that will raise by a single farthing the price of bread; I do not think that it will raise to any substantial degree the price of corn (hear, hear), and I do not think, therefore, that the farmer is going to get a great deal out of that. But I *attach more importance to a duty on flour.* (Cheers.) I propose to put such a duty on flour as will result in the whole of the milling of wheat being done in this country.* (Cheers.) From that I expect two advantages. *In the first place, I expect more employment.* (Cheers.) This trade, which to a certain extent we have lost, will be revived. There will not only be the milling of wheat in the great ports, but we may expect to see mills started again in the country towns, giving employment to a large number of labourers in the district, and to that extent benefiting the whole of the labourers. (Cheers.) In the second place, we shall keep in this country all the bran and other offal (cheers), and, as you know better than I do, that will have the effect of cheapening feeding stuffs. It must have that effect not merely on feeding stuffs produced in this country, but on feeding stuffs imported from abroad; and in these circumstances the farmer, the small owner, and the allotment-holder would be able to keep more stock, and breed and rear more stock, to increase their dairying operations, and to keep more pigs. All those branches of farming are at the present time the branches from which,

* *A particularly admirable suggestion.*

I think, he derives the larger part of his profit. Then I propose to put a smaller duty of 2s. a quarter on every other kind of foreign corn—with one exception—barley, oats, rye, and so on. The exception is maize. Whether I am right or not, it is for those who are more learned in agriculture than I to say. But my proposal is based on this—namely, that in any scientific tariff we must try to keep raw materials as cheap as possible; and therefore I myself should not propose to put any duty on maize, which is an important feeding stuff. Neither should I put any duty at all upon manure, whether it be natural manure or artificial manure. At the same time, I propose a duty of 5 per cent. on foreign meat and dairy produce. I propose a similar duty on foreign poultry, eggs, vegetables and fruit. (Cheers.) I believe that these duties will help especially the small farmer—the holder of small quantities of land—to make his cultivation more profitable. When I consider that, excluding meat altogether, we are actually importing at the present time something like £40,000,000 of dairy, vegetable and other by-products of agriculture, I cannot help believing that if we are to keep even a portion of that trade for our own people, our own growers and labourers, we should do a great deal to make farming more profitable and to benefit the condition of the working man.

"What will be the result of these proposals? They may slightly raise the price of the articles affected. It does not at all follow that because they raise the price of the raw produce—of wheat, for instance—that they will necessarily raise the price of the manufactured article—of bread—but they may raise it somewhat, although only to a very small extent; and that will, besides giving the farmer a slightly better price for his produce, help him to increase his production and to cheapen the cost of it. I base my argument upon the experience of foreign countries. It may be wise sometimes to take a lesson from the foreigner.

The Case of France.

"I cannot help thinking that our neighbours in France, for instance, manage these matters better than we do our-

selves. What is the case of France? In France you have 5,000,000 people on the land. The majority of them are small holders who own their land. Let me say once more, speaking to the labourers, that one of my aspirations has been that the number of small holders of land should be increased.* I believe that these proposals will tend to increase it, and that it will be to your advantage as farmers also if you make the labourers partners with you. If you can give them the same interest as you have, then you will work together, then you will be what you have never been—a power in the land. Well, with these 5,000,000 small holders in France—and I might come nearer home and say that with the hundreds and thousands of small holders in Ireland—the bogey of the dear loaf has no meaning whatever. They are not frightened by it, they do not believe in it. (Loud laughter.) If the canvassers who recently went round to the electors of Oswestry and told the wives of the labourers that if my proposals were carried their loaf would rise from 5d. to 10d.—if these people, I say, were to go round in the French villages—well, they would have a very warm reception. (Laughter, and 'Hear, hear.') Wherever small holders exist in any number there you will find that they, at any rate, are not afraid. They do not believe that to give a certain advantage to the home production is going to be an injury to the home commerce. (Cheers.) But now let me go a little further into the case of France. They have 18,000,000 acres of land under wheat cultivation, and we have only about 1½ million. Those 18 millions of corn land have produced 18 millions of acres of straw, and having the straw and having the offals the farmer is able to rear a very much larger number of oxen and of dairy cows. The oxen and the cows turn the straw into manure; the manure is used to fertilise the soil; and the poor soils produce under this system an enormous amount of vegetables and fruit and all the by-products that are sent into this country to compete with the production of the farmers and the labourers of the United Kingdom, very much to their disadvantage.

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* *Mr. Chamberlain was Chairman of the Select Committee on Small Holdings.*

(Cheers.) That is one side of the question—one side of the comparison with France. But let us look at the other. Does this system in France raise the cost of living? Remember that the duties in France are much greater than anything I propose. The duty on corn in France to-day is 12s. 2½d. a quarter—more than six times as much as anything that I propose. The duty on meat is 1d. a lb., which is more than double what I propose. Now, if the Radicals were telling the truth—if what they say were correct—the cost of living in France ought to be enormous, and yet it is much lower than it is here.* ('Hear, hear.') It is probably true that the French peasant pays a little more for his bread, but he gains so much on his meat, on his vegetables, on his poultry, on his eggs—on all these other things—that on the whole the cost of his living is much lower and his margin at the end of the week is much greater than that of the labourer here. ('Hear, hear.') Now these duties I speak of were imposed in France in the year 1892, and the latest figures only come down to 1900. But in those eight years the price of wheat fell in France 20 per cent., while at the same time it only fell 11 per cent. in this country. The price of beef fell 10 per cent. in France and it rose 2 per cent. in this country, and the price of beef in 1900 in France was 6½d. a lb., while the price of the same beef in England averaged 9d. a lb.

The Price of Food.

"Now what is the result of the foregoing figures? The result is this—that the duty, any duty, placed on the products of agriculture does not necessarily increase the price of food ('hear, hear'); and I will say more than that; I will say that *it never has in our experience, or in the experience of any foreign country, increased the price of food to a proportionate or equivalent amount.* (Cheers.) *But if it does not increase the price of food it does, in all cases, extend the production of food, increase the employment of labour, and cheapen the ultimate cost to the consumer.* My proposals, therefore, I say, will bring to the labourer more employment, and will not raise the cost of his living. But

* *Readers will find further facts on this interesting point elsewhere in this book.*

I am not satisfied with that. I want to do something more for him, and for all the poor in this country. ('Hear, hear.') I want to reduce the cost of the living, and I believe it can be done under this system. *These duties that I have spoken of will be paid in the main by the foreigner* (cheers); they will be the foreigner's contribution—and it is a very small one—to our national expenditure; but they will bring in a great number of millions a year. *What are we going to do with those millions?* We are not going to bury them; we are not going to spend them. *We are going to use them to reduce the cost of living and the cost of food for the people of this country.* (Cheers.) There are politicians who tell you they are free-fooders. (A laugh.) I suppose they do not know what they are talking about. (Laughter.) There are no "free-fooders" in this country. ('Hear, hear,' and cheers.) The taxation of food is very heavy, but these people seem to think that there is only one kind of food. They seem to think that you live by bread alone (renewed laughter). On the contrary, every labourer will tell you, every class in the community knows, that we have to live upon a good number of other things as well, and most of them are heavily taxed. There are heavy taxes on tea, on sugar, on coffee, on cocoa—and on tobacco. I do not know whether you agree with me, but I am rather inclined to agree with the gentleman in the "Pickwick Papers," who said that tobacco was meat and food to him. (Laughter.) *Well, all these millions which come from the pocket of the foreigner we will give you back in reductions upon your tea and your sugar, and I hope upon your tobacco.* (Cheers.) We can afford to take off 4½d. a lb. on tea, a ½d. a lb. on sugar—which is half the tax—and, as I have said, something on tobacco also. Now we will put tobacco on one side, and ask, What is the effect of the reduction upon tea and sugar alone? When the labourers go home from this meeting I wish they would take their wives into consultation. I wish they would ask them, 'How much tea do you use in the week? How much sugar?' The Board of Trade say that on an average every agricultural labourer's family uses two-thirds of a lb. of tea and 6 lb. of sugar in the week. If that be true, the saving upon the reduction on tea and

sugar alone would be 4½d. a week to every labourer's family ('hear, hear'), and although that is not a great deal, *I venture to say it is a great deal more than anybody else has ever promised you.* (Cheers.) The watchword of the new policy which I recommend for your acceptance, the watchword in the agricultural districts, is this:—'*More profit for the farmer, more employment for the labourer, and cheaper food for his family.*' (Cheers.)

ANTICIPATIONS.

"I have one word more to say to the farmer. I have told him already that my scheme is not a finished and complete scheme. It is not a law of the Medes and the Persians, and it may be amended by subsequent consideration, and there are certain things I have not taken into account in it. There is the question of local taxation, and there is the question of railway rates, in both of which respects the British farmer is in a worse condition than the foreign competitor. ('Hear, hear.') Now, as regards railway rates, I can do nothing for you, but you can do everything for yourselves. But as regards local taxation, if it be true, as I believe it is, that in competition with the foreigner you pay more than he does, then he has what I call an unfair advantage over you; and in that case it is part of the general principle that I have laid down of fair play all around, that in any rearrangement of taxation full consideration should be given to this, and the farmer should no longer be handicapped as I think he is at present. (Cheers.)

"Well, I think I have fulfilled the promise I made to you when I began. I have been perfectly honest and frank with you. I have told you exactly what I propose. I have told you what I think will result from the proposals that I make to you. I think that the rearrangement of taxation which I ask the public to sanction will help the farmer in the bitter and strenuous competition which he has to meet from the foreigner in all parts of the world. I think that the particular proposals will stimulate his industry precisely where stimulus will be most advantageous and profitable. If it does not materially raise the cost of the articles which he produces, *it will enable him to*

produce on a larger scale and to decrease the cost of the articles that he produces, so that his profit will be larger. ('Hear, hear.') *To the labourer it will bring benefits proportionate to those it brings to the farmer. It will give him a better hope, a regular and fairly paid employment. I think he may rest assured that, while it is not likely in any case to raise the cost of food, it is quite certain that the general cost of living will be reduced.* (Cheers.)

THE COLONIES.

"But before I sit down I have one other word to say. My policy is not merely an economic policy. It is also Imperial. It is not addressed only to your pockets. It is addressed above all to your patriotism. (Cheers.) These changes that I propose will enable us to reciprocate the offers that have come to us from our colonists across the sea. (Cheers.) It will enable us to arrange a closer commercial intercourse with those who are not only our children, but also our best and ever most profitable customers. (Cheers.) We must always buy something—buy a large part of what we consume from abroad. We can never produce all our requirements at home. Would you not rather buy what you want from your friends, from those who stand by you in trial and stress (loud cheers), than from the foreigner, who is never very sympathetic, never very appreciative of the great work which the British race has undertaken in the world? (Cheers.) I do not believe there are many villages which have not some relative, some friend in one or other of the great Colonies under the British flag. And these distant connexions of ours have not forgotten the old home, the old people, the old flag. (Cheers.) They showed their feeling in the late war, when we were in difficulty and doubt. They showed no hesitation in coming to our assistance (cheers); and when the foreigner, whose industry we have been building up during the last 60 years, sneered at our failures and rejoiced at our losses, these colonists of ours, these men of our flesh and blood, gave us their moral and their material support. (Loud cheers.) They poured out their blood. They gave us of their treasure. They showed that we were one kin, one people, and one nation.

(Loud cheers.) *They did that for you in war; they have not forgotten you in peace!* (Loud cheers.)* Now also they want to draw closer together to the Motherland. Now also they prefer to deal with you rather than with strangers. (Cheers.) They have proved their sincerity by offering to us preferences on everything that we produce and that we send to them. ('Hear, hear.') They ask us to meet them half way. They ask us to grasp the hands which they hold out to us. (Cheers.) They ask us to contribute to their prosperity without injuring ourselves. They ask us to give them the trade that we now give to the foreigner. ('Hear, hear.') In return they will do more for us even than they have already voluntarily done. They will take more of our manufactures; they will find work for the people in our towns—and remember that the people in our towns are the best customers for the people in the agricultural districts. ('Hear, hear.') They will do all this for us. They can supply us with all the corn and the meat that we require, and that we cannot produce for ourselves. They can supply it us as cheaply as the *foreign* markets from which we now obtain it. While those foreign markets only take a few shillings per head from us, these Colonies of ours take as many pounds. And what is to be your answer? What do you say to these men who retain so lively a recollection of their connexion with the old country, who long for the time when we shall be indeed a united Empire? Will you snub them? (Cries of 'No, sir.') Will you reject the offers that they make to you? Ladies and gentlemen, believe me here is the greatest of the issues of our time. Let us bind these folk of ours, let us bind them to us by ties of interest as well as by ties of blood and sympathy. Let us unite the Empire; the great aspiration of the wisest and best of your statesmen. *Let us enable the British race throughout the world* to hold their own not unmindful of the traditions, the glorious traditions, of their past, and able to continue them through generations and the ages yet to come. (Loud and long-sustained cheers.)

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* *There was no mistaking the keen, appreciative feeling of the huge audience at this expression, which was instantly responded to by a huge outburst of enthusiastic cheering.*