

SCOTCH FARMING

IN

ENGLAND.

A SECOND LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR

OF THE

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.

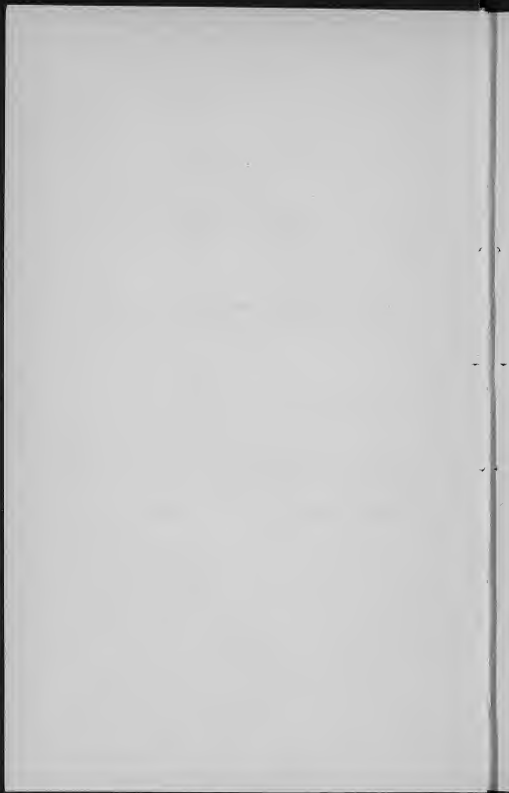
BY

ROBERT HYDE GREG.

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SCOTCH FARMING

IN

THE LOTHIANS.

(TO THE EDITOR OF THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.)

SIR,

I had the pleasure of addressing a letter to you some weeks since, on the subject of Farming in the Lothians, which seems to have attracted much attention, not only in the neighbourhood for which it was chiefly intended, but throughout the United Kingdom.

The principal facts mentioned in my "Letter," stand recorded in the evidence of the Scotch witnesses, before the Parliamentary Committee on Agricultural Distress, during the Sessions of 1835 and 1836,—evidence rendered accessible to the public, through the excellent "Compendium," published by Mr. Hutt, then Member for Hull. As, however, the body, it is said, cannot become infected unless it be in a fit state for contracting a disease, so, it would seem, the public mind cannot be impressed with truths, unless circumstances be favour-

able for the reception of them; and this must be the case at present, if I may judge from the interest excited by my "Letter."

After describing the superior style of farming in the Lothians, and the flourishing condition of landlord, tenant, and peasantry, resulting from it, I deferred entering at that time upon the second part of the subject, namely,—the means of introducing, generally,* a similar system into England.

I shall now proceed to offer a few suggestions on this head.

Before doing so, however, I can scarcely avoid a short reply to some of the criticisms which have been passed on my former "Letter."

In the first place, it has been observed by several correspondents who have honoured my "Letter" with a public notice, that I had not described sufficiently the nature of the soil and climate of the Lothians. To supply this deficiency, I cannot do better than quote the authority of another of my critics, "*One who has whistled at the plough*," and who is himself a native of the Lothians:—

"It is, however, necessary to be more particular in describing the Lothians than Mr. Greg has been, lest people at a distance may form an idea that these districts are *naturally* a broad paradise of peace and plenty.

"The three counties stretch along the south side of an arm of the sea, called the Firth of Forth, over a distance of

* "*Generally*" introduced, because the farming throughout a great part of Northumberland, Lincolnshire, and Norfolk, is little inferior to that of the Lothians; indeed, Scotland is, perhaps, indebted to Norfolk, for some of the best parts of its system of cultivation.

between 70 and 80 miles. Linlithgowshire, called West Lothian, contains 71,680 acres, of which 50,000 are cultivated, but many of these are a poor, cold soil; 10,000 uncultivated, yet capable of giving some profit to their owners; and 11,680 are altogether unprofitable. Edinburghshire, or Mid-Lothian, contains 230,400 acres, of which 181,000 are cultivated; but much of that quantity is also a cold soil, and not one-half of it so good as the middling land of Buckinghamshire, very little of it, if any, so good as the Vale of Aylesbury, 20,000 acres are uncultivated; and 29,400 are unprofitable. Haddingtonshire, or East Lothian, contains 160,000 acres, of which about 100,000 are cultivated; 30,000 uncultivated; and 30,000 unprofitable.

“The uncultivated and unprofitable bears the highest proportion in the latter county; but the cultivated is, upon the whole, a better district naturally than that of Mid-Lothian, and much superior to West Lothian. Excepting some particular and very limited localities—limited when compared with poorer ones—such as the Merse of Berwickshire, the Carse of Gowrie, on the Tay, and small portions of some other counties, the cultivated land of East Lothian is greatly superior to any in Scotland, yet it is barely equal in its natural qualities to one-half—perhaps I would speak more correctly if I said two-thirds—of the cultivated land in England.

“Such, then, is East Lothian; and I deem this explanation necessary to guard strangers from supposing that all the county is a rich soil. Neither must it be supposed that such good farms as Mr. Greg saw could be seen in other parts of

Scotland, except in the limited districts already named; but it must be recollected, and I crave pardon for again repeating it, and dinning it into the ears of the English landlords, that one-half, if not two-thirds, of the land ploughable in England could be rendered as productive at as small an expense as the best farms seen by Mr. Greg, save, perhaps, those adjoining Edinburgh, where advantages are found not common to more rural districts.*

In the second place, it has been remarked that my "Letter" failed to note, with sufficient minuteness, the variations of rent, at the various distances from Edinburgh, as likewise, the

* From wishing not to exaggerate, I believe I have fallen into the opposite error of understating the average weight of the Lothian crops, at least, of those grown within six, or seven miles of Edinburgh. The average wheat crop is nearer six quarters, to the Scotch acre, than five. Generally, when crops are quoted at all, *great crops*, not *average ones*, are spoken of. It may be interesting to give the particulars of the wheat crop of one farm I am acquainted with, in the Lothians, to compare with what may have been accomplished in England.

CROP OF 1841.

70 Acres, Scotch, \times by 6 qrs. \times 80s. = £24. per acre.

CROP OF 1842.

70 — — — \times by 8 qrs. \times 60s. = £24. per acre.

Rent . . .	£4. 10s.
Expences . . .	£9. 10s.

Total cost.—£14. 0s. per acre.

Leaving a net profit of £10. per acre, or, £700. each year, on the crop of wheat alone, and the money in hand by the 15th of November each year.

The seed of the last crop was *Baltic*, of the kind called woolly-eared.

Contrast this result with the following:—"Within a short distance of the City of Durham, I can look upon nearly a hundred square miles of country, the average produce of which is not more than ten bushels ($1\frac{1}{2}$ quarter) of wheat per acre." (statute). "What can be done for English Agriculture?"—*Johnston's Letter to the Marquis of Northampton.*

burdens to which the different farms I quoted were subject; but, as I have entered fully into these points in the *notes* to my "Letter," now published as a pamphlet,* and a second edition of which is before the public, it is perhaps unnecessary to repeat my observations.

I may reply, in general terms, to other criticisms, that I am far from supposing the Lothian system of agriculture can be adopted, in all its details, in every place, any more than that the rents current within a few miles of Edinburgh are attainable, except within a moderate distance of some great town. Neither did I recommend, that *all grass land should be ploughed up*, and no permanent pasture be allowed, nor other matters which have been attributed to me.

I merely described the general facts which struck me, whether from their novelty, or their importance, hoping thereby to rouse the attention of my countrymen, and induce them, so far, at least, as their peculiar circumstances permitted, to emulate the successful cultivation of the Lothians. Enough, surely of that system admits of general application, to challenge the attention and awake the activity of every agriculturist on this side of the border. A suitable course of cropping, economy in the use and keep of horses, † good implements, and steam engines, where the extent of a farm warrants it, may

* By Ridgway, 169, Piccadilly.

† A farmer in the county of Warwick told a friend of mine, a few days since, that he had reduced his farming stud from *thirteen* horses to *six*; saving above £200. per annum, and clearing thereby two-thirds of his rent.

In going to London last week, the only two ploughs I saw at work in the mid-land counties, had each *five* horses attached; common ploughs and land by no means stiff!

everywhere be introduced. Above all, the land may be furrow drained wherever requisite, money rents be converted into corn rents, and a tenancy-at-will tenure be exchanged for one of leases.

But to proceed with the subject more immediately before us, viz.—How can such an improved system be introduced generally into England? The difficulties we have here to encounter are, it must be confessed, of a very serious character. “Where,” as I inquired in my former “Letter,” “are the landlords ready to grant a nineteen years’ lease? Where the farmers of sufficient intelligence and capital to manage successfully 500 acres of land, and able and willing to lay out 1,500*l.* or 1,800*l.* in draining alone during the first two years of their lease? Where the ploughmen educated enough to convert into bailiffs on such farms, for an extra shilling a week?”

I still adhere to the opinion, “that *the more generally diffused and more practical education of the Scotch* has been at the bottom of this improved state of things.”

It is true, my intelligent critic, “*Who has whistled at the plough,*” disputes the soundness of this opinion, and he speaks with experience, having been himself brought up in a parish school in the Lothians; but, though little knowledge of a superior kind may be imparted to the youth in these schools, I am convinced, it is through their agency that the mind is first awakened, the intellect developed, and the means of subsequent education placed within the pupil’s reach. That Englishman must be dull, or prejudiced in the extreme, who

can travel through Scotland, without being struck by the quickness and intelligence of the peasantry and farmers, compared with what he ordinarily encounters in England.

The disadvantages of Scotland, as to soil and climate, may, as the above critic observes, have stimulated exertion, as high rents may quicken the energy of farmers, and high taxation, that of a nation; and this, perhaps, is one cause why the eastern parts of England are better cultivated than the western and central parts.

But, if inferiority of soil and climate be a principal cause of the superiority of Scotch farming, this superiority ought not to have been developed first in the Lothians: improvement, there, would have followed, not led the way. Even the long leases, which he properly ranks amongst the chief causes of superior cultivation, I believe may be traced, ultimately, to the intelligence derived from early education. Besides, without intelligence and some ambition, a long lease only encourages idleness, and offers a bar to improvement. It is notorious, that, in England, the worst farming and the poorest tenantry are found in connection with the longest leases and lowest rents. Opportunities and advantages are necessarily thrown away, without sense and knowledge to turn them to account.

The *low state of intelligence*, therefore, arising from a want of early and better education, I am inclined to place at the *foundation of our difficulties*. This shows itself, amongst other instances which might be quoted, in a stupid prejudice against all innovation, and, frequently in a dogged resistance to it. A few weeks ago, I introduced a thrashing machine on

my own farm in Hertfordshire ; but, the second day, it was broken by a bar of iron, which some one had concealed, for the purpose, in a sheaf of wheat. A similar fate befel another thrashing machine which had just been put up, on a farm of 1,000 acres, in the neighbourhood. Considering the benighted state of the poor fellows who broke this machinery, impressed, doubtless, with the belief that the machines would doom them to the workhouse, and that there existed no world, for them at least, beyond the limits of their own parish, we can feel no surprise, and ought not to feel much anger, at their conduct.

But the farmers themselves, in many parts, regard the introduction of machinery with hostile feelings. The language they hold is this—" There are too many labourers in the parish already, and you increase that surplus by the machines you introduce ; the ratepayers at large must maintain those whom you discharge, which is no less injustice to them, than hardship to the poor labourers. *Since we must maintain them, we might as well employ them.*" Not a few of the landowners entertain similar sentiments, and employ the same words in expressing them.

But breaking thrashing machines is a trifle, compared with *the fires of the incendiary*, which may be the doom of those who make themselves peculiarly obnoxious, from any cause, to any individual. Now, it must be admitted, that such theories, on the one hand, and such practices, on the other, offer a serious bar to the progress of improvement. For every thrashing machine actually broken, 100 are prevented from being put up ; and the conflagration of a single stack-yard makes

every farmer in a county recoil from his contemplated alterations.

This unfortunate state of things results from the want of better education,—a deficiency, originating in the culpable neglect, or open opposition of the gentry of England. They must be content, therefore, to reap as they have sowed; and, if they should, hereafter, be desirous of recruiting their diminished incomes by introducing the system of our northern neighbours, let them not chafe too rudely at the difficulties they may encounter, for those difficulties originate, in a great degree, with themselves,

The evils of a surplus population, however, it must be admitted, are not easily dealt with, as every one must be aware who has resided, for a short period, in a purely agricultural district.* The very humanity which secures a maintenance

* When the New Poor Law was first put into action in the southern counties, a demand for labourers in the manufactories of the north was fortunately coincident with the distressing surplus of labour in some of the agricultural parishes. Messrs. Ashworth and myself pointed this out to the Poor Law Commissioners, and suggested the propriety, and general advantage, of promoting an emigration from some of the overburdened parishes, and offered to divide amongst our own establishments the whole surplus of one or two parishes, where the pressure of surplus labourers was the greatest. For rendering this public service, for such I esteem it, we have, ever since, been loaded with abuse by a large portion of the daily press, particularly the London "Times," and by men-orators of all classes. The agricultural labourers of the south have been persuaded that the unfortunate fellows who were beguiled from their happy homes in their native parishes, have been "sacrificed to Moloch;" a fate which, from not fully comprehending, sounds the more alarming in their ears. The manufacturing operatives, on the other hand, have been persuaded that a reduction in their wages took place in consequence, and that we had, from motives the most selfish, cruelly robbed them of the fruits of their labour, by introducing "foreigners," as they term the southern labourers, to compete with them. We may esteem ourselves fortunate in having escaped personal injury and damage to our property. But, I would ask, is such

to the labourers, whatever their numbers, or moral character, encourages the delusion, that all have a *natural right* to maintenance,—a right, if it be one, nature herself is incompetent to make good. But such a *legal right* renders it more imperative, that the lower classes should be intelligent and civilized beings; otherwise such a law may become, with an ignorant and reckless population, incompatible with the rights of property, and the existence of social order.*

There is no way of arriving at the necessary amount of intelligence but through the medium of education,—of an education, too, wider in its range than now attempted in our best village schools,—wider, indeed, than the present race of village schoolmasters is competent to impart. How just are the observations of M'Culloch on this subject:—“Accidental circumstances may, and indeed frequently do, involve individuals in the greatest distress and difficulties: but national poverty, or, which is the same thing, *a low average rate of wages, is exclusively caused by an excess of population.* The grand object, then, of all who wish to improve the condition of the poor ought to be, to render the increase of their numbers

doctrine, preached to such parties, less unsound, than breaking thrashing machines, and lighting incendiary fires? Is it not rather, equally foolish and mischievous, the result of the same ignorance, and without the same excuse? Necessity is about to introduce more correct principles.

* A *right to maintenance* seems to be grounded, only, on the denial to the labouring classes of such an education, as would enable them properly to understand their own condition, and the means of improving it, and on the artificial contraction of the natural channels of employment.

After securing to the labouring classes the best education their circumstances would admit of, and striking off all the fetters of industry, no equitable claim to maintenance would exist, and the policy of granting it, be doubtful.

slower than the increase of their subsistence and accommodations,* and perhaps there is nothing which would contribute more powerfully to this end, that would tend so much to improve the habits of the labouring classes, and to give additional force to the principle of moral restraint, *as the early instruction of the young in the plain and elementary principles, with respect to population and wages.* The causes of national poverty should be explained to all classes of the people, that all may be rendered aware of their existence, and enabled to provide against them. Education should be made a means of explaining the constitution of society, and of making the people acquainted with the circumstances on which their condition must always mainly depend."

"It should be kept in mind, that, however well the poor may in other ways be instructed, if they are not made acquainted with the circumstances which regulate the rate of wages, comparatively little is done to amend and improve

* This doctrine of M'Culloch must not be taken without qualification, for though true, as regards a parish, where all born in it have a right to maintenance, and all the land in a state of cultivation, and no room for the profitable employment of more labourers, consequently a proper lesson to be impressed upon the youth of a parish, it is not practically true of the kingdom at large, for there is still room for population to increase, and every channel of profitable employment is not yet filled up. Indeed, were it otherwise, there is still ample room to expand in our Colonies and in the world at large, and, with intelligence and industry, a knowledge of the fact, that England was fully peopled, and a readiness to act upon it, population might continue to increase and to thrive, without fear of treading on the heels of subsistence, for many centuries yet to come, in spite of M'Culloch and of Malthus. But, if all born in a parish, whatever their numbers, think to be maintained in the parish, and all born in the country think to thrive in it, whatever their numbers, and whatever the commercial restrictions, they will find, to their cost, that they have not only trod on the heels of subsistence, but actually tript it up.

their condition. A mere knowledge of the arts of reading and writing will not enable workmen to obtain higher wages; nor, supposing that they are *all* taught to be more expert in their several trades and occupations, will that circumstance, of itself, have any considerable effect upon their condition. Nothing but a change in the proportion which their numbers bear to the amount of capital can give them an increased command over the necessaries and conveniences of human life. And, therefore, it is plain that the main objects of every system of public education, intended to *increase the comfort and happiness of the poor*, ought to be, to show them wherein the power of regulating wages really consists, and to teach them how to use it advantageously."—(Note on the article "Wages;" M'Culloch's edition of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.)

The existence of a nobility depends upon a limitation of its numbers, and a landed, or money aristocracy can be maintained only on the same terms. If a landowner has more than one son, the younger ones must seek their fortunes at a distance. If a farmer has more than one son, as only one can succeed him on his farm, the rest must either migrate, or sink into the condition of common labourers. The humble peasant is not exempt from a similar necessity: one son only can step into his place, low as that place may be; the rest must quit their parish, or enter the workhouse.*

This general necessity of seeking, elsewhere and in other channels, the means of livelihood, entailed on the increasing

* This lesson ought to be taught in every village school, with the Rule of Three and the Catechism.

population of every class in our rural districts, ought to show them the importance of keeping *other occupations, such as the manufacturing and commercial*, which are in their nature more *expansive*, in a healthy and flourishing condition.

In the meantime, as a temporary expedient, would it not be better to employ so many labourers, only, as may be necessary for the most profitable cultivation of the land, and allow the balance to accumulate, as so much *absolute, ostensible surplus*? The labourers would thus be made aware of the excess of their numbers, which they scarcely are now, upon the plan of allowing *two* men to dawdle over the work which might be accomplished by *one*, on the plea of being obliged to maintain them both. They might, perhaps, in such case, pause a little before committing themselves to early marriage, and become more earnest in searching out new channels of employment at a distance, when they see that none exist at home.

The state of intelligence, however, amongst the farmers of a great part of England is little raised above that of the common labourer. How few have received any education deserving the name! How few there are who read!—fewer still who travel about to see what is going on elsewhere, and to note what improvements may be introduced at home! *Isolation*, an almost unavoidable disadvantage to which the cultivator of the soil is exposed, and the circumstance of the few persons he can associate with being of the same rank, education, and prejudices as himself, are evils which act with double force on an unenlightened mind. Education alone, the company of books, and the excitement arising from the knowledge and interests

they impart, can mitigate the mischiefs resulting from so unfavourable a position.

The charge of want of education may, indeed, be brought, with equal truth, against the landowners themselves. They receive no *special instruction* which may serve to fit them for the management of their estates, or the guidance of those to whom the cultivation of their estates, and, consequently, the amount of their incomes is entrusted. I will not, however, dwell on the evils arising directly and remotely out of this strange omission in the education of the higher classes.

Amongst the impediments, therefore, to the introduction of a superior system of agriculture in England, I place —

1. What I have been describing at so much length, *the low state of intelligence of both farmers and labourers*; speaking, of course, generally, and not stopping to name parts of the country which may be deemed exceptions to the rule.

2. *The divided and uncertain ownership of land*, particularly such as arises out of common rights, and the undefined claims of lords of the manor and the crown. It is not easy to believe what extent of fertile land, as well as that of inferior quality, is doomed to partial cultivation, or total sterility, from this cause. To give a few instances, falling more immediately under my own observation. In the parish where I reside, there is a common of 1,000 acres, capable of high cultivation; such portions of it as have been reclaimed letting for 4*l.* or 5*l.* per acre; and yet, from variety and uncertainty of ownership, and expense of acts of enclosure and of law, it is doomed to perpetual waste. In Hertfordshire, adjoining my own farm,

and in some of the neighbouring counties, a right of common pasturage exists over all the uninclosed country ; which limits the land to corn crops, with every third year a fallow. It is true, in many parts this right is not enforced ; but the land is valued at 25 per cent. less, owing to its existence, and a 9*d.* rate only is imposed, instead of the usual 1*s.* rate, which is levied upon all land of similar quality, but which is not subject to this antiquated right.

A third case, also within my own observation, is the rich valley of the Lea, between Ware and London, the finest soil, and reaching to the very walls of the metropolis. It is traversed, in its whole extent, by a navigable river and railroad, and within reach of an unlimited supply of manure ; yet, from being subject to common rights and other causes, a great part remains in grass, in a state of comparative unproductiveness. Here and there, fields, bearing enormous crops of mangel, potatoes, or turnips, show how great might be the production, were all under similar culture.

A great extent of fine land, and, from its vicinity to large towns, capable of being rendered most productive, is, in like manner, doomed to comparative sterility from the common rights of pasturage.* Probably not less than from one-sixth to one-eighth of the land in the south of England is similarly situated, under various titles, as *moor*, *common*, *forest*, *plain*, or *down*. In all these parts, labour is abundant ; so abundant,

* The rights of the burgesses, or the corporation, frequently extend over the richest lands in the vicinity of ancient boroughs, and prevent their being enclosed and cultivated.

indeed, that a man's wages do not exceed 7s. to 8s. a week; and nothing is required to cover these wastes with smiling harvests, and to give employment and food to the half-starved population, but a *mere permission* to cultivate them, a mere withdrawal of the obstacles which now prevent the cultivation.

If the legislature prohibits, or thus carelessly permits the existence of such impediments to the cultivation of our soil, it surely cannot, with any show of reason, interfere to prevent our population being fed from the soil of other countries. It is playing the part of the dog in the manger.

3. *The Law of Entail.*—By this law most landlords are not owners of their own estates, but merely, what the law styles them—“*life tenants.*” They are, perhaps, absolutely prohibited from granting to their tenants leases of 19 or 20 years; they are, at all events, prevented from mortgaging their estate, or selling a part of it, so as to have the remainder of it cultivated on an improved system; consequently, most entailed property is less productive than it might otherwise be rendered. It may be said, that a landowner may devote some portion of his income to this purpose; but what he *can* save is more justly devoted, perhaps, to the maintenance of his younger children, than to swelling the rental of his eldest son, on whom the whole estate, with all its improvements, must descend.

The law of entail, therefore, dooms a large portion of the united kingdom to a state of inferior cultivation, and comparative unproductiveness; and, as in the former case, it is unjust

to the community at large, to prevent them from supplying their necessities elsewhere. The law, if not abolished, should, at least, be so far relaxed as to offer no impediment to perfect cultivation, but allow capital to be raised from the estate, for improvements of a permanent nature. Mr. Handley's draining bill was founded on a principle of this kind, enabling the life tenant of an estate to charge upon it the money laid out in permanent improvements.*

4. Another difficulty which stands in the way of improved cultivation is the general *prevalence of tenancy-at-will* tenure, and the unwillingness of landowners, by granting long leases,

* "The 10th Geo. III, cap. 51, for draining, planting, enclosing, &c., allows three-fourths of the money so expended, to the extent of four years *free* rent of the estate, to be a burthen on the succeeding heirs of entail.

"Also for building and repairing mansion house, and making roads, a certain portion is allowed to be laid on succeeding heirs." So says a Scotch Advocate, and I am not lawyer enough to say whether the above be English law, or only Scotch. My friend, however, remarks, "That the act is all but a dead letter. The *improvement* must be *proved*, and there are various obstacles, any one of which is sufficient to prevent capitalists from risking their cash, on such slippery security, at common rates of interest. The only cure for entails is to knock them on the head—surely, at all events, new ones ought not to be granted, and the old ones would soon cease to exist, if each successor were allowed to sell a part, say, one-fifth. Let them sell the land, and *the purchaser will improve*, provided it pays. The law of entail does not impede improvement much in our best districts, (the Lothians and Berwickshire, &c.) where there is a wealthy tenantry, but in places not so happily situated, unless the proprietor furnishes the funds, improvement stands still, even with nineteen years leases. Proprietors (not *life renters*) of £500. or £5,000. per annum, are the sort of men to put a new face upon a country side, and in a rich country, like this, land will always find a purchaser, as is shown by its immense increase in value of late years. The bad *moral effects* of entails, I need not point out to you."

If the great landed proprietors of the eastern Highlands of Scotland could sell a portion of their *wide wastes*, it would, indeed, put a new face on the hill side, as my friend truly observes.

to resign the incidental privileges which attach to landed property. If the English landowners, however, covet the enjoyment of Scotch rents, and a tenantry of intelligence and capital, such as exists in the Lothians, they must make up their minds to grant long leases; they must resign all claim upon their tenants' votes, and no longer permit their game to ravage their tenants' crops.

It is true, long leases must be confined to such tenants as will make a proper use of them; a limitation which will, I fear, cut off a considerable portion of the present race of farmers. Long leases to such as are destitute of sense and capital, so far from promoting improvement, sensibly retard it; and deeply is it to be lamented, that the general experience of English landowners is against granting leases. This, however, proves nothing, but the poverty, or *low state of intelligence* amongst the English farmers, and in no respect militates against the necessity of long leases to an improved cultivation, where this involves, as in most cases it does, a more than ordinary expenditure.* “In truth, if we calmly reflect on the risks which the yearly tenant runs, we cannot fail to be satisfied, that there are really serious drawbacks against the permanent outlay of his capital upon the soil. He may unintentionally offend his landlord, or his landlord's agent, and be summarily dismissed; or his landlord may die,

* I have been much surprised, on asking farmers who were paying only 18s to 20s. per acre, if they would not be glad of a twenty years lease, to receive an answer in the negative, or one, at least, implying indifference. Such persons are conscious they have the land *under its value*, and fear the valuation which might accompany, or, rather, precede the granting of a lease.

and a new system under the heir may unsettle his position; or, while his improvements are in progress, his rent may be unexpectedly augmented; or his experiments may be unusually slow in repaying themselves, and he may himself die before he has recovered his capital from the land, for the use of his family.”*

“Where there are so many tenants-at-will,” observed Mr. Bennett, at the Annual Meeting of the Bedfordshire Agricultural Society, “or under short leases, at rack rents, and in the total absence of any law to compel a landlord to give compensation for improvements on dismissing a tenant, however much privation the labourers may suffer, or to whatever extent the community at large may be injured, improvements cannot reasonably be expected. But, on the other hand, let long and liberal leases become general, and security be given that the tenants shall reap the rewards of their industry, and be fairly compensated for their outlay of capital, and we shall soon find no difficulty in our rural districts about surplus labourers.”

Again, if the landowners are anxious to improve their incomes, they must not only be prepared to grant leases, but they must, amongst other sacrifices, reduce, in number and extent, their covers and preserves, and give up, or greatly abate the quantity of *game* upon their estates. The first materially diminishes the extent of profitable surface, and the latter occasions a most serious deduction from the quantity of produce. On a well preserved estate, the destruction by *game*

* What can be done for English Agriculture?—*Johnston*.

is a tax, not much inferior in amount to the *tithe*, and may be reckoned at 3s. or 4s. per acre.

I have at this moment lying before me particulars of a large estate advertised for sale. The first farm on the list consists of 244 acres, rent 210*l.* per annum; and the second, 239 acres, rent 220*l.* Both the farms are within twenty-five miles of London, *tithe free*, and let to yearly tenants; and a note is attached to the description of both, “*an exceedingly low rent, in consequence of the damage arising to the crops from the game and rabbits.*”

The landowners must not attempt to “*eat their cake and have their cake,*” as the saying is. They must not deny to a tenant the security of a lease, claim his vote at elections, keep a quarter of their estates in cover, permit their game to destroy his wheat and turnips, and yet expect him to pay a full rent; neither must they tax the community, by the creation of a monopoly, to enable him to pay a full rent. They must choose between diminished income and diminished privileges, and not attempt to keep up both at the expense of the nation, by maintaining the corn-laws.

5. Next to tenancy-at-will we rank *money rents*, as the great bar to improvement in English agriculture. It is to the conversion of money rents into corn rents, as they are called, that the Scotch farmers attributed their superior condition, and their ability to continue improvements upon their farms, even during the trying times of 1833 to 1835. They emphatically state, in their evidence before the agricultural committee, that the tenantry had been “*saved*” by this change,

and that, in every case where the rents had not been so converted, they had been "ruined."*

A corn rent is the payment of a certain fixed quantity of the farm produce to the landlord, in lieu of a certain fixed sum of money. In other words, the tenant pays only so much money as the number of quarters of wheat, or barley, which constitutes his rent, have actually sold for in the market. The price is ascertained from the public sales from which the averages are obtained. Mr. Shaw Lefevre, in his "*Remarks on the Present State of Agriculture*," observes, "It appears, that the practice which prevails in Scotland, of letting farms on a long lease, and at a corn rent, has tended very much to encourage agricultural improvement in that country; and a corn rent must be particularly favourable to tenants in those seasons when crops are sufficiently abundant to lower the market price of corn. In years of scarcity, on the other hand, they cannot be of equal advantage to the farmer; and perhaps the most perfect system would be to allow a portion of the rent to vary with the price of that description of corn which forms the ordinary produce of the farm, and the remainder to be fixed money payment."†

It would lead us too far, were we to enter fully into the *modus operandi* of corn rents in every contingency. It is sufficient to know that they stand between a farmer and his ruin, at the critical period of a sudden and extreme, or of a

* "Corn Rents," or, more correctly, *produce rents*. If a dairy farm, the rent should be regulated by the price of dairy produce, cheese, milk, and butter.

† Perhaps this plan may be, on the whole, as fair as any.

smaller and permanent, depression of prices. In the case of high prices, arising from deficient harvests, there may probably be alleviations to set against the advance of rent which is consequent upon the advance of prices,—such, for example, as an accompanying advance on some part of his produce, which may not be deficient, or a gain on his stock on hand. Manufacturers and farmers know, practically, that it is *falling* prices, not *rising* ones, which injure them; and we may safely leave the merits of corn rents to the unanimous testimony of Scotch landowners and tenants. The advantage of them to the latter is obvious from the fact, that no Scotch farmer will enter on a farm at a money rent.*

* From subsequent information, I have reason to believe that I have stated this somewhat too strongly. The evidence before the Agricultural Committee is, indeed, all but unanimous. The high prices of corn since 1836, however, seems to have disturbed this unanimity.

“ I take the question to be, ‘ whether or not grain rents are on the increase generally in Scotland,’ and this I cannot answer decidedly, nor will it be easy to ascertain *the fact*, although the cause of a run on either may be explained. To simplify the case,—suppose the whole world farmed by one man, and that he had an option of 50s. money rent, or one quarter of wheat,—and let his crop for three years be represented by 3, 4, 5:—

GRAIN RENT.

Crop.	Rent and Price.
3 qrs.	- 75s. 0d. \times 2 = 150s. for farmer.
4 —	- 50s. 0d. \times 3 = 150s. —
5 —	- 37s. 6d. \times 4 = 150s. —

MONEY RENT.

Price per Quarter.	Rent.
3 qrs. \times 75s. 0d. = 226s. 0d. — 50s. = 175s. 0d. for farmer.	
4 — \times 50s. 0d. = 200s. 0d. — 50s. = 150s. 0d. —	
5 — \times 37s. 6d. = 187s. 6d. — 50s. = 137s. 6d. —	

Now, in both cases, the crop is taken as equal, the fluctuation in price also, as equal, yet, with the fixed money rent, the farmer's profit varies from 175s. to 137s. 6d. and he will *vary his cry* for a grain, or money rent, accordingly. For this

The principal difficulties, then, in the way of the general establishment of an improved system of agriculture in England, I conceive to be—

1. The low state of intelligence amongst the English farmers and labourers, and the general ignorance of landowners themselves on the science of agriculture, and proper management of their estates.

2. The uncertain and divided ownership of land, arising out of common and manorial rights.

3. The law of entail, by which no man owns his own estate.

4. The prevalence of tenancy-at-will, and unwillingness of landowners to grant leases, and to resign the incidental privileges of landed property.

5. The rents being paid in a fixed amount of money, instead of a given quantity of produce.

The appropriate remedies suggest themselves, or have been already alluded to. The *education of a nation* being a slow business, let us commence quickly and resolutely, and in the meantime, apply such alleviations as may be within our reach. Had a sound system of national education been established by Lord Grey's Government, we should now be far on the road towards a better state of things. Let the legislature

reason it is very probable that the *high prices* of late years have led to more money rents. Only yesterday, however, I heard of a farmer asking for a conversion into grain rent, thus, the *low prices* will react in favour of the latter. I think few will dispute which is *safest* for the farmer, but the excitement of gambling is natural to them as to others.

“By the way, I had a second letter from Mr. C. enquiring about ploughing with two horses, and saying, that ‘his people invariably set their faces against it.’ I wrote him, that this ‘setting of faces,’ was stiffer than his stiffest clay.” W. D.

simplify the tenure and ownership of land, and reduce the expense of Enclosure and Partition Acts. Let the law of Entail be so far relaxed as to enable the owners of property to raise the capital necessary for an improved cultivation of it. Let landlords grant long leases to such intelligent and improving tenants as they are fortunate enough to meet with, and let them remember that bankers, or friends will advance money to a farmer, for the purpose of improving his farm, *if he has a lease of it*, but not to a mere *tenant-at-will*. Above all, whether leases be granted or not, let *money rents* give way to *corn rents*.

A consciousness of these difficulties on the part of the cultivator, added to a desire of maintaining rents, has made the landowners of this country shrink from foreign competition, and seek, in the imposition of the Corn-law, a substitute for their own exertions, or their own sacrifices. But this cannot continue; a new state of things is inevitable, and must be considerately, but resolutely met. It is become necessary to apply some powerful stimulus, which shall awaken, at once, from their lethargy, the common labourer, the farmer, and the greatest landowner, and lead them cordially to unite in the introduction of a better system. The stimulus must be that of *necessity*, the fertile mother of invention, the spur to action, the achiever of so many triumphs; and this necessity must be induced by the *wholesome agency of free competition*, by a repeal of all protective legislation. A free competition with foreign agricultural produce is, now, not only become desirable, in order to induce a more skilful cultivation of the soil, but a

final settlement of the laws regulating the importation of corn and provisions is *almost essential to the introduction of a better system*. As things now stand, with old prohibitions relaxed, or broken down, with universal opinion setting in for free trade, with the increasing agitation for an entire repeal of the Corn-laws, and a growing conviction of the necessity of granting it: if our commerce and manufactures are to be preserved, it is evident that no arrangements between landlord and tenant, no plan for an improved cultivation of the land, no buying and selling of estates, no charging them with mortgages or annuities, no transaction whatever, connected with the value of landed property, can safely be entered into. *The present law is not a settlement*, and no one imagines it to be so. No law founded upon a *sliding scale*, which, by preventing all regular trade in corn, curtails the operations of the merchant and the manufacturer, and by admitting the accumulations of foreign corn on the recurrence of every abundant harvest, ruins the farmer, can be a permanent settlement, or will long be submitted to by any interest. The conviction is gradually gaining ground, there can be but one resting place; and that a permanent settlement can be effected only on the firm foundation of a free trade, a free introduction of the agricultural produce of other countries, or subject to such protection only as may be equivalent to any burdens of a peculiar nature, should there be any such, which press unequally and unfairly upon the cultivator of the soil in this country.

The landowners need not be afraid of the value of their property declining. Nothing can, by possibility, reduce its

value, but the declining prosperity of the nation. With a limited surface, a dense and rapidly increasing population,— a population eminently industrious, and ambitious only of being allowed to labour, with boundless capital, craving investment, and the land producing only one half what labour and capital might cause it to yield, no fear can be more groundless than that any portion of it should cease to be cultivated; or, indeed, that *every portion should not increase in value*. The value of land does not consist in the nominal money rent, but in the amount of net produce it yields, and the command which such produce gives over the services of other men. With the means in our possession, and requiring only to be called into action, the net amount of produce may be *doubled*, and, with it, the intrinsic value of the land itself.

Nothing is wanting but a proper stimulus to make us enter vigorously upon a more enlightened, a more just, a sounder, and *more profitable system* of agriculture. That we have not entered upon it sooner, is owing, primarily, to the existence of laws which have shut out competition, *or which have been relaxed, only to let in ruin and discouragement*.

“ It appears to me surprising, that, in this great and enlightened nation, the only means adopted in recent times, and which have been followed up with any degree of vigour, either by the state, or by the agricultural body itself, for the encouragement of agriculture, have been the *establishment of new, or the modification of existing fiscal regulations*. Intent on these uncertain benefits, they have neglected those sure advantages which a more scientific culture would confer, and

which advantages no party opposition could either withhold or withdraw. They have clamoured for brass from an unwilling or half-friendly legislature, and have passed by the gold, which nature, through the hands of science, willingly and plentifully offers."—"Whatever becomes of those measures of protection, on which that interest has, in too great a degree, hitherto depended, there is too much energy and elasticity in the national character, *and specially in the hitherto, comparatively, dormant agricultural class*, to justify us in entertaining depressing fears, in regard to the future prosperity of English agriculture. Looking calmly forward to what many think the worst possible conclusion of the present struggle, I would rather say—Why should agriculture creep ever timidly along the shore, claiming protection and shelter from each headland and harbour, while other arts steer boldly into the wide and open sea; and, spite of storms and rivals, vindicate for themselves a swift and safe career? With science for her compass, bounteous nature for her pilot, and the skill and perseverance of her country for her resource in every difficulty, *she, too, may launch fearlessly into the deep, sure, as I believe, of a prosperous voyage, and a happy haven.*"*

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

ROBERT HYDE GREG.

Norcliffe, Nov. 26, 1842.

* What can be done for English Agriculture?—*J. Johnston.*

THE END.