

ciency from 1696, was to gradually produce the certain effects of general education upon a keen and energetic race. The mode of living amongst the peasantry of Scotland might be mean, as compared with the diet of the peasantry of England; but the agency was at work which would raise the condition of every labourer in Scotland to a level with his compeers beyond the Border. A humble lot in life was not incompatible with mental cultivation. Allan Ramsay, in the reign of Anne, was a worker in the lead-mines of the earl of Hopeton. Robert Burns, even in 1781, subsisted upon oatmeal when a flax-dresser. But if Johnson, with his usual prejudices, chose to describe oats as a grain eaten by horses in England and by men in Scotland, the time was fast approaching when the national food would cease to be associated with national poverty; when agriculture, improved beyond all example, should fill the land with unprecedented fertility; when the mineral wealth of Scotland should be worked with the same diligence as the cultivation of the soil; when the commerce of the Clyde should approach that of the Thames and the Mersey, and its iron steam-ships should go forth to every sea; when cotton-factories, and print-works should emulate the gigantic mills of Lancashire; when, in a word, there should be no distinctions of enterprise or wealth, and national jealousies should only put on the form of harmless local opinions, that belong to the past of romance, rather than to the past of history.

In the purely Agricultural Counties of England the changes, even of a whole century, are not so remarkable as to demand from us any attempt to point out such extraordinary contrasts as we have heretofore dwelt upon. The great seats of tillage were the South Eastern, the South Midland, and the Eastern districts. The slow increase of population is the index of their progressive condition. Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hants, and Berks, had an aggregate population at the beginning of the eighteenth century of about seven hundred thousand; at the end of that century they were a little above ten hundred and fifty thousand. Herts, Bucks, Oxon, Northampton, Huntingdon, Bedford, and Cambridge, had, at the beginning of the same period, about five hundred and eighty-two thousand inhabitants; at its termination they had only about six hundred and forty thousand. The Eastern Counties had, during the same hundred years, only increased from five hundred and eighty-two thousand people to seven hundred and fifteen thousand. But it must

be remarked that the aggregate population of these fifteen counties had increased from about two millions and a half, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, to about four millions and a half at its end. The whole of the eighteenth century had been a period of very tardy improvement in cultivation. The first fifty years of the nineteenth had been a period of extraordinary development of agricultural resources.

In the reign of Anne the quantity of land under cultivation in England and Wales was very little more than in the reign of James I. One solitary inclosure Act was passed in the reign of Charles II. There were two inclosure Acts passed in the reign of Anne. Field-turnips were cultivated in King William's time; but their cultivation was not encouraged till the time of George II. The cultivation of clover was advocated by Andrew Yarranton before the Revolution; but the peculiar value of green crops was little understood. The alternate system of husbandry—the growth of turnips or clover after a corn crop—was recommended in the middle of the seventeenth century. But the old system of fallows, by which half of the cultivated land always lay idle, was steadily adhered to. The horse-hoeing husbandry of Jethro Tull was considered only as a costly experiment which had ruined its originator. The value of manure was little understood by the improvident farmer; and even the system of folding sheep upon ploughed lands is mentioned as “a new method of husbandry.”* Improvement in the breeds of cattle was not attempted till the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1710 Davenant estimated the average net weight of the cattle sold at Smithfield at 370 lbs. The average nett weight in 1800 was 800 lbs. The sheep of 1710 weighed 28 lbs. The sheep in 1800 weighed 80 lbs. Without the alternate husbandry neither the ox nor the sheep could be supported through the winter, or adequately fattened at any time, except in low meadows and marshes.

The comparatively large population of London and Westminster, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, had a marked influence upon the agricultural industry of the South Eastern, South Midland, and Eastern Districts. A large quantity of corn was necessary for the consumption of the populous city, and much corn was grown within the districts most convenient for carriage. In 1696, it was estimated by Gregory King that the annual growth of wheat, oats, barley, rye, and beans in the whole kingdom, amounted

* Defoe, “Tour,” vol. i. p. 283.

to ten million quarters, of which growth wheat was only one-fifth. The greater portion of the wheat went to the large towns. The rural population lived upon rye-bread, and barley-bread; and oat-cake. The Eastern counties of Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, and the counties of Kent, Hampshire, and Sussex, had ready water-communication with London by the Thames, below-bridge. Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire, had the same facilities by the Thames above-bridge. We may trace the incessant industry necessary to keep up the land and water communication with the capital, displaying itself in districts somewhat remote from the seaports and main-roads. With every natural advantage the communication was laborious and costly; and its cost added very considerably to the price of grain and meat to the consumer. Some of the corn-trade of the port of London gradually resolved itself into the meal-trade. Farnham was the greatest commercial corn-market in England, particularly for wheat, until the farmers of Sussex and Chichester ground their wheat, and sent the meal to London by sea.* This trade was increased when the Wey was made navigable from Guildford, and thence to the Thames. By this navigation of the Wey, timber was brought by land carriage, for a distance of thirty miles, from the woody districts of Sussex and Hampshire.† The demand for timber to meet the increase of London was more profitable than its use in the iron-works of Sussex, which were still smelting iron ore, and casting cauldrons and chimney-backs, cannon and cannon-balls, in the reign of George II.‡ In Essex, we see the influence of the wants of London. There was little to be noticed at Chelmsford, but that it was a large thoroughfare town, full of inns, maintained by the multitude of carriers and passengers on their way to London with droves of cattle, and with provisions and manufactures.§ Not the least remarkable of these supplies for the capital by the eastern parts, were the droves of turkeys, crowding the roads from Ipswich, and making their way over the heaths and commons, in almost incredible quantities to the great devourer. From the farthest parts of Norfolk, and from the fen countries, droves of geese, sometimes a thousand or two thousand in a drove, were slowly moving on to their fate, from the beginning of August, feeding on the stubbles after harvest; and “thus they hold on to the end of October, when the roads begin

* Defoe, “Tour,” vol. i. p. 214.

† *Ibid.*, p. 230.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

to be too stiff and deep for their broad feet and short legs to march in.”*

The weaving industry of Norwich was more important at this period than the industry of any other city or town of England. The villages round Norwich were wholly employed in spinning yarn for what was known as the stuff-weaving trade, which had been there pursued for four centuries. Every inhabitant of Norwich was working at his loom, his combing-shop, or his twisting-mill. The rich marshes watered by the Yare fed hundreds of black cattle from the Scotch hills; so that the thickly populated districts of the eastern parts of Norfolk were plentifully supplied with animal food. The fishery of Yarmouth not only furnished an enormous export of cured herrings, but gave all the towns and villages another cheap article of food. The whole country was full of business activity whether in manufactures or in sea-faring occupations; a curious evidence of that unremitting industry being, that pheasants were unmolested in the stubbles, which showed, says Defoe, “that the country had more tradesmen than gentlemen in it.”

In the immediate neighbourhood of Cambridge there were presented, in the autumn of every year, two remarkable spectacles, in striking contrast to each other. To Newmarket went William III. in 1695, with his staid court, as Charles II. had gone thither with his troops of dissipated followers. But Newmarket was still a scene of vice and folly, of frantic gaming and wild profaneness. The highest of the land were at Newmarket,—“so eager, so busy, upon their wagers and bets, that they seemed just like so many horse-courers in Smithfield; descending from their high dignity and quality to picking one another’s pockets.” So writes the sturdy moralist, who speaks of vice in no courtly fashion.† The other scene near Cambridge was Stourbridge Fair—the greatest fair in England. Thither came to a row of booths called Cheapside, every sort of retailer from London. Here were prodigious wholesale transactions accomplished in wool and woollen goods, brought from Lancashire and Yorkshire and the Western Counties. But more extensive than any other traffic was that of hops. From this fair the whole country beyond Trent was supplied with hops, grown chiefly in Kent and Surrey, in addition to the supply of all the Midland counties. It is no small proof of the energy which overcame every natural difficulty of communication—bad roads—imperfect water-carriage—that a produce of considerable bulk

* Defoe “Tour,” vol. i. p. 62.

† *Ibid.*, p. 87.

should be brought from two distant counties to an inland common, thence to be distributed over the whole kingdom.

The two great ports of the Eastern coast, Ipswich and Harwich, were not in a flourishing condition after the Revolution. Ipswich had lost its colliery trade, and its cloth trade. Much of its ancient splendour had gone. More than a century was to pass before it was to take the lead in carrying forward those great changes of agricultural economy, which were to mark the age of thrashing-machines, of sewing-machines and of the almost countless implements of scientific husbandry. Harwich was the packet-station for Holland. When the army of Marlborough was fighting, year after year, on the great battle-field of Europe, Harwich was the busiest of ports. Coaches went twice a week to carry London passengers from and to this famous place of embarkation and of landing. But when peace came, the Londoners set up passage-boats which went direct from the Thames; the coaches ran no more; and Harwich decayed. On the opposite South-eastern shore, Sheerness had been fortified; and the Medway bristled with lines of guns; so that the danger with which Chatham, the greatest naval arsenal, had been threatened in the time of Charles II., was held to be sufficiently guarded against. Margate was a small port, the inhabitants making no boast of its summer visits of shoals of shrimp-eating Londoners, but of the frequent landings there of William III. Ramsgate boasted only of the more antique honour which it claimed, that Julius Cæsar had there landed. The inhabitants of these little places long continued to be, as they were described by Camden, "amphibious creatures, and get their living both by sea and land. * * * The self-same hand that holds the plough steers the ship." The port of Sandwich had become choked with sand. Dover was prosperous as the principal packet-station for France. Folkestone was a mere village. The harbours of Rye and Winchelsea had been ruined by the inexorable changes of the coast-line. The sea had receded, and had left them desolate. Hastings was in little better condition. Winchelsea had still a trade remaining to it, that of electioneering venality; and so had Shoreham, Bramber, and Steyning. Brighthelmstone was "a poor fishing town, old built, and on the very edge of the sea," which had at the beginning of the century swept away many houses; so that the inhabitants had obtained a brief to beg money throughout England, to raise embankments. These were estimated to cost eight thousand pounds; "which," says the tourist of those times, "if one were to look on

the town would seem to be more than all the houses in it are worth. Portsmouth was in a prosperous condition through the French war; and was strongly fortified. Southampton was a port whose commerce had decayed; but it had a noble High-street and a spacious quay. As we advance to the Western Coast, we find Purbeck prosperous in fitting out ships to carry paving-stone to London; and the quarries of Portland profitably worked, in furnishing the free-stone with which the new cathedral of St. Paul's, and other public edifices of London, were being built.