

...the affections of good men and in the practice of domestic virtues." There was public work for Washington to do—the work of directing the formation of a new government for a great people, the first time that so vast an experiment had ever been tried by man—finally resting from the supreme power to which his arms had raised him over the nation he had created, and whose

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

Political despondency at the close of the American War.—Supposed decay of Population.

—Its real increase.—Development of the productive power of the country.—Agriculture extended and improved.—Agricultural condition of the Eastern, South Midland, North Midland, and South Eastern, counties.—Norfolk.—Mr. Coke.—Suffolk.—Essex.—Buckinghamshire.—Oxfordshire.—Northamptonshire.—Bedfordshire.—Francis, duke of Bedford.—Improved breeds of sheep and oxen.—Robert Bakewell.—Consumption of animal food in England.—Cambridgeshire.—Lincolnshire.—The Great Level of the Fens.—Lincoln Heath and the Wolds.—Nottinghamshire.—Derbyshire.—Surrey.—Middlesex.—Kent.—Sussex.—Hants.—Berkshire.—Windsor Forest.

THE summer which followed the close of the American war is described as "an amazing and portentous one."\* There were alarming meteors and tremendous thunder storms. For many weeks of June, July, and August, the sun was clouded over with a smoky fog that proceeded from whatever quarter the wind blew. At noon, it cast "a rust-coloured ferruginous light;" at rising and setting, it was "lurid and blood-coloured."† The phenomenon prevailed over the whole of Europe. The people looked with a superstitious awe on the "disastrous twilight." The poet asked of contending factions,

"Is it a time to wrangle, when the props  
And pillars of our planet seem to fail;  
And Nature with a dim and sickly eye  
To wait the close of all?" ‡

With "fear of change," monarchs were perplexed. Politicians of every rank, subject as Englishmen are to skiey influences, then especially believed that their country was ruined. Sir John Sinclair, one of the most enlightened men of his time, who, with a few others, had confidence in the resources of British spirit and industry, ventured to hold a different opinion. He says, that in 1783, in the midst of such terror and despondency, he hesitated not to assert that Britain might still preserve its elevated rank amongst the powers of Europe, although his ideas were then considered visionary.§ He rested his confidence upon the principle that debts and taxes were not alone sufficient to effect the ruin of a nation;

\* White's "Selborne," Letter lxx. † *Ibid.* ‡ Cowper, "Task," book, ii.  
§ "History of the Revenue," vol. ii., Appendix iv.

and he was supported by the fact, that for a century previous the same gloomy prognostications had always resulted in the undeniable advance of the country in material prosperity. Some of these prognostications were not the mere clamours of popular ignorance, or factious exaggeration, or foreign jealousy. Lord Lyttleton, in 1739; lord Bolingbroke, in 1745; David Hume, in 1761; Adam Smith, in 1776; Dr. Price, in 1777; lord Stair, in 1783,—each honestly believed that England was fast approaching the condition of inevitable bankruptcy. In 1784, marshal Conway, who, as one of the Shelburne administration, had been ejected from power in the previous year, writes to his brother,—"I feel rather obliged than angry at all those who have any how contributed to shuffle me out of the most troublesome and dangerous scene this country was ever engaged in. I don't desire to be an actor in the ruin of my country; and if the vessel must sink, I had rather be a passenger than the pilot. . . . The sums spent in losing America are a blow we shall never recover."\*

The statesmen and economists who predicted absolute ruin from any increase of the Public Debt beyond a certain maximum—twenty-five millions, or a hundred millions—never appear to have adequately contemplated the possibility of the productive power of the country keeping pace with the additional load of taxation. Sir William Blackstone, who in general exhibits a pleasant optimism as to matters of government, speaks out very plainly as to the inconveniences of enormous taxes caused by the magnitude of national incumbrances. He tells the public creditor that money in the funds does really and intrinsically exist only in "the land, the trade, and the personal industry of the subject, from which the money must arise that supplies the several taxes."† The pledges for the security of these debts being thus defined, the question of the security can only be answered by estimating the capacity of a country to make constant advances in a course of material improvement.

The common notions of the decline of England that prevailed during the first and second decades of the reign of George III. were associated with the vehement assertion that her population was decreasing. Poets and statisticians equally maintained that "wealth accumulates and men decay."‡ Goldsmith admits that the depopulation which his exquisite poem deplures, is affirmed by several of his wisest and best friends as "no where to be seen." Yet Goldsmith had supporters in his opinion, who had no pretensions to "the

\* MS. Letter in the possession of the author of the "Popular History," 3mo. y.  
† Kerr's edit. vol. i. p. 322.  
‡ "Deserted Village."



poet's imagination." Dr. Price maintained, in 1777, that England and Wales contained no more than 4,763,000 souls. Arthur Young, in 1770, says, "it is asserted by those writers who affect to run down our affairs, that, rich as we are, our population has suffered: that we have lost a million and a half of people since the Revolution; and that we are at present declining in numbers."\* The estimates of Gregory King, founded upon the Return of the Hearth-money collectors, exhibited a population of five millions and a half at the period of the Revolution.† Either those estimates were utterly fallacious, and ought to have shown a million and a half less of people; or the belief was a delusion that "it is employment that creates population"—that "all industrious countries are populous, and proportionably to the degree of their industry."‡ From the accession of George I. to the war with the North American Colonies,—a period of sixty years,—the country had been steadily progressing in a course of improvement; in partial inclosures of cultivable waste land, in better methods of husbandry, in extension of manufactures, in more complete means of internal communication. The advance was slow, compared with what remained to be done. An elaborate and careful statistical writer of 1774, in setting forth the improving position of the country, puts in the title-page of his work that it is "intended to show that we have not as yet approached near the summit of improvement, but that it will afford employment to many generations before they push to their utmost extent the natural advantages of Great Britain."§ Could this sensible writer have contemplated the possible approaches to "the summit of improvement," made by only two generations, his readers of that period would have regarded him as a madman. Yet at that period the industrial energies of the people were stimulated to turn aside from the beaten track in many new directions. The capability of Britain greatly to multiply her resources began to be dimly perceived. We now know, as a reliable fact, that population had increased, and was increasing.

A comparison of the excess of Baptisms over Burials, corrected by the experience of positive enumerations, shows, that from 1751 to 1781, the population had increased at a rate exceeding 400,000 for each decennial period; the increase in the whole of the previous fifty years having been little above 200,000. Upon that increase of nearly a million and a quarter in thirty years, there was a still larger increase of more than a million and a half in the twenty years

\* Young, "Northern Tour," vol. iv. p. 556. † *Ante*, vol. iv. p. 384, and Table, p. 438.  
‡ Young, "Northern Tour," vol. iv. p. 551.  
§ Dr. Campbell, "Political Survey," 2 vols. 4to.

from 1781 to 1801.\* The start in the national industry, supplying new sources of profitable labour, and new means of subsistence, to increasing numbers, appears to have been singularly concurrent with that outburst of public spirit which attended the administration of the first William Pitt. The shutting up of one portion of British commerce by the war with America had no permanent effect upon the development of the general prosperity of the country; although we are in no condition to judge how far that development might have been impeded by the waste of capital in war. The industrial period, from the accession of George III. to the war of the French Revolution, is a very interesting one to be described in detail. We apply ourselves to the task, in something like a continuation of the plan of that general view of National Progress which we have given at the period of the accession of the House of Hanover, and partially through the reign of George I. †

Arthur Young, one of the most exact of those economical inquirers who had no official data upon which to found their calculations, in reckoning the entire population, in 1770, at 8,500,000 souls, appears to have over-estimated the total number by about a million and a quarter. The population of agriculture, exclusive of landlords, clergy, and parochial poor, he reckoned at 2,800,000. The number of farmers he reckoned at 111,498; of men-servants and labourers, at 557,490. In the census of 1851, we have a return for England and Wales of 225,318 occupiers of land, employing 1,445,067 labourers. The farmers would thus appear to have doubled in eighty years; the labourers to have almost trebled. This comparative estimate, imperfect as it is, enables us to form some notion of the agricultural industry of those eighty years, as giving the means of subsistence to all who were employed upon the land. But the improvement appears far more striking when we consider that, in 1770,—taking the population at Young's estimate of 8,500,000, and reckoning the adult males at a fourth of that number,—one-third of the adult male population, as enumerated by him, was employed in providing food for themselves and their families, and for the other two-thirds of the population; in other words, whilst one man was cultivating the land, two men were engaged in other occupations. This proportion indicates a high state of civilization. But a much higher condition was reached in 1851, when only 26 per cent. of the adult males were agricultural; that is, whilst one man was cultivating the land, three men were engaged in some other employment. The ascendancy of scientific theory

\* "Report on the Census of 1851," p. lxviii.  
† *Ante*, vol. iv. chapters XIX. and XX.



over traditional practice has produced this striking change; and that ascendancy has been called forth more and more by the certainty of the profitable application of capital to agricultural enterprise. This application of capital, in the first twenty years of the reign of George III., may be in some degree indicated by the circumstance that the Inclosure Bills passed from 1760 to 1779 were more than a thousand in number. Improved methods of husbandry were concurrent with this extension of the area of cultivation. The great features of this period of the development of the vast productive powers of the soil are very marked; and without touching upon the technicalities of agricultural science, we may not unprofitably enter upon such a general view of the condition of particular districts, as may show how earnestly many were then labouring to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before and yet how much they left to be done by the labours of other generations. Incidentally we shall notice the condition and manners of the rural population.

We commenced our previous general view of the National Industry with a brief survey of the West of England, the seat of the greatest commercial and manufacturing prosperity at the beginning of the eighteenth century. We now propose to make a similar examination of the agricultural condition of the East of England, continuing our former sketch of the development of the resources of that portion of our island. We use the term "East" as a general phrase, in the same way that Arthur Young used it in his "Farmer's Tour through the East of England." If a line be drawn from the British Channel, keeping to the east of the Avon, on to the Humber, also keeping to the east of the Trent, it will include four of our great Registration Divisions, in which pastoral and agricultural industry is the predominant feature now, as it has been from the earliest times. These divisions,—the Eastern, the South Midland, the North Midland, the South Eastern,—comprise twenty counties out of the forty of England. Their progress in population was not very marked till after the beginning of the present century. According to Gregory King they numbered, at the Revolution, 2,364,735 souls. They had increased, in the census of 1801, to 3,078,591; but in that of 1851, to 5,674,494. They always fully kept pace with the general advance of the population of England and Wales, amounting, as nearly as may be, to one-third of the whole, at the three several periods.\*

"All England may be carved out of Norfolk, and represented therein," says the quaint Thomas Fuller. He there saw fens and

\* See Table, ante, vol. iv. p. 438.

heaths, light and deep soils, sand and clay, meadows and pasture, arable and woodlands. The variety of the shire made its ancient cultivation necessarily as various. Experimental agriculture proceeded very slowly. The fens were undrained; the sands were unmarled. Gradually Norfolk, and its neighbour Suffolk, became the nurseries of what was termed "the new husbandry." Arthur Young states that at a period not beyond sixty years, forty years, and even thirty years, from the time when he travelled through Norfolk, all the northern and western, and a part of the eastern, tracts of the country were sheep-walks, let as low as from 6*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*, or 2*s.* an acre.\* The great change came with inclosures, long leases, and large farms, by the marling of light lands, and by the introduction of an excellent course of crops, in which the culture of turnips and clover was the distinguishing feature. "Turnips on well-manured land, thoroughly hoed, are the only fallow in the Norfolk course."† Farmers in many other districts had attempted the turnip husbandry, but found it unprofitable through their own ignorance and slovenliness. In the East Riding of Yorkshire very few would incur the labour of hoeing their turnips.‡ Some alleged that small turnips were better than large, because the sheep would eat up the small and leave much of the large. The wisest of the Norfolk farmers sliced their turnips, even without a special machine for saving that labour. The four-course system of crops was that of the Norfolk farmers—turnips, barley, clover, wheat. Many other cultivators attempted to obtain two and even three white crops in succession, and then left the land to recruit itself in a year, or several years of barrenness, in which the rapid growth of weeds made the supposed rest a real exhaustion. Six years after Arthur Young had been eulogizing the husbandry of a portion of Norfolk, Mr. Coke came into possession of his estate at Holkham. In that year of 1776 the whole district was uninclosed. The only wheat consumed in that part of the county was imported. Mr. Coke, "converted West Norfolk from a rye-growing to a corn-growing district."‡ But he did something even better. Unable to let his estate even at five shillings an acre, he determined to become a farmer himself. He did not set about his work with the self-conceit that might have been produced by a large fortune and high connections. He gathered about him all the practical agriculturists of his district, who came once a year to partake his hospitality, and to communicate their experience to the spirited young man who wanted to learn.

\* "Eastern Tour," vol. ii. p. 150.

† "Northern Tour," vol. i. p. 247.

‡ Earl Spencer in "Journal of Royal Agricultural Society," vol. iii. p. 1.



He very soon was enabled to become an instructor himself. The annual sheep-shearings of Holkham grew famous throughout the civilized world. Men came from every quarter to see a great English gentleman—who had raised his rents from tens to hundreds, and had yet enriched his tenants as much as himself,—mixing, with a far nobler simplicity than that of the feudal times, with guests of every rank; seeking from the humblest yeoman who was earnest in his calling the knowledge of some new fact that would benefit his district and his country. Mr. Coke's agricultural knowledge was not mere theory. He taught the Norfolk farmers to turn their turnip-husbandry to a better use than that of producing manure, by teaching them how to improve the qualities of their stock, in the judgment of which he was thoroughly skilled. During his long life he had the satisfaction of seeing most of the triumphs of scientific husbandry; and his example pointed the way to that continued course of improvement which has effected such marvels since the British agriculturist became self-reliant, and saw that his prosperity needed no protective laws to maintain a supply of food quite commensurate with the rapid multiplication of the people.

The agriculture of many parts of Suffolk is described by Arthur Young as emphatically "true husbandry." He says, "those who exalt the agriculture of Flanders so high in comparison with that of Britain, have not, I imagine, viewed with attention the country in question." Thomas Tusser, who was a Suffolk farmer in the middle of the sixteenth century, attributes the plenty of Suffolk—the mutton, beef, corn, butter, cheese, and the abundant work for the labouring man—to the system of inclosures, which he contrasts with the common fields of Norfolk. Suffolk, as well as Essex, was very early a country "inclosed into petty quillets," according to Fuller, whence the proverb "Suffolk stiles," and "Essex stiles." Sir John Cullum, in 1784, describes the drainage of the arable lands as the great improvement that had fertilized spots that before produced but little. The farmer was no longer content to let his soil be "water-slain," the old expressive term in Suffolk for undrained wet land. He knew nothing of draining-tiles; but he cut drains two feet deep, and wedge-shaped, filling them with bushes, and with haulm over the bushes. Sir John shows how the cultivators had learned the value of manure, instead of evading the compulsory clause of their leases by which they were bound not to sell the manure made in their own yards. He paints, as "the late race of farmers," those who "lived in the midst of their enlightened neighbours, like beings of another order. In their personal labour they were indefatigable; in their dress, homely; in

their manners, rude." Their "enlightened neighbours," he says, lived in well-furnished houses; actually knew the use of the barometer; and instead of exhibiting at church the cut of a coat half a century old, they had every article of dress spruce and modern. The ancient farmers had, however, a spirit of emulation amongst them, which they displayed in the drawing-matches of their famous Suffolk punches—that wonderful breed of which two would plough an acre of strong wheat land in one day. We have the details of a drawing-match in 1724.\* Young says of this breed, that "they are all taught to draw in concert; that teams would fall upon their knees at the word of command, and at a variation of the word would rise and put out all their strength."† Improving as was the general agriculture upon the good lands of Suffolk, the sandy districts on the shores of the Channel were in a miserable condition, before some tincture of geological science had taught the cultivator to look for the elements of fertility in the organic matter below the sand. Crabbe, with his exquisite fidelity, had described the husbandry of his own native district of the river Alde. It is a most impressive picture, not only of the peculiar barrenness of that district, but of other districts where slovenly cultivation had not called forth the resources of art to aid the churlishness of nature:

"Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,  
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor,  
From thence a length of burning sand appears,  
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;  
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,  
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye:  
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,  
And to the ragged infant threaten war;  
There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil;  
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;  
Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,  
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;  
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,  
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade."‡

The Suffolk labourers were fed abundantly, but somewhat coarsely. They ate their country's rye-bread with their country's stony cheese—"too hard to bite," as Bloomfield found it: whilst the farmer luxuriated in his "meslin bread," half wheat and half rye. The plough-boy's breakfast was the brown bread soaked in skimmed milk. When the country was over-run with rabbits, before the improved system of agriculture was introduced, the in-door servants stipulated that they should not be fed with

\* "History of Hawsted," chap. iv. † "Eastern Tour," vol. ii. p. 174.  
‡ "The Village," book ii.



"hollow-meat," as rabbit flesh was termed, more than a certain number of days in the week.\* Fuller speaks of the rabbits of Norfolk as "an army of natural pioneers"—the great suppliers of the fur for the gowns of grave citizens, and of "half beavers," the common hats.† The trencher was not then superseded by pewter and earthenware. The old simplicity was not gone out:—

"Between her swagging panniers' load  
A farmer's wife to market rode."‡

The good matron looked impatiently for the "pack man," who came to her gate periodically with fineries from Norwich; or Ipswich; and with smuggled tea from the eastern coast, when three-fifths of the tea used was clandestinely imported. She delighted in the housewifery of the "horky," when the last load had come home with garlands and flags, and the lord of the harvest, the principal reaper, led the procession, to be led home himself when the strong ale had done its work.

Norfolk and Suffolk are now the principal seats of the manufacture of those implements which, in 1851, were held to have saved one-half of the outlay of a period only twelve years previous, in the cultivation of a definite amount of crop. The Suffolk "Farmer's Boy" describes the rude plough (probably almost wholly made of wood) in which "no wheels support the diving-pointed share." The boy did not take kindly to the swing-plough, which was more difficult to guide. From ridge to ridge moves "the ponderous harrow;" "midst huge clods he plunges on forlorn." He breaks the frozen turnip with a heavy beetle. The seed is sown broad-cast. Arthur Young laments that, "if a person, the least skilled in agriculture, looks around for instruments that deserve to be called complete, how few will he meet with."§ At Lawford, near Manningtree, he rejoices to have found "a most ingenious smith," who has made a new iron swing-plough, a horse-rake on wheels, and a hand-mill for grinding wheat.¶ Out of the persevering ingenuity of such men have proceeded the manifold instruments of modern agriculture—the lighter ploughs; the "cultivators," that save ploughing; the clod-crushers and scarifiers; the drills; the horse-hoes; the threshing and winnowing machines; the turnip-cutters and chaff-cutters; the draining ploughs and drain-tile machines. The application of machinery and chemical science to the production of food has produced results as important as in any other branch of manufacture, under which term we must now include the modern achievements of the spirited farmer.

\* Forby's "Vocabulary of East Anglia," vol. ii. p. 423. † "Worthies,"  
‡ Gay. § "Eastern Tour," vol. ii. p. 498. ¶ *Ibid.* p. 212.

The limited economical observation of the author of "The Farmer's Boy," suggested a lament that "London market, London price," influenced the production of his county; that "dairy produce throngs the eastern road;" that along that highway were travelling

"Delicious veal and butter, every hour,  
From Essex lowlands and the banks of Stour;  
And further far, where numerous herds repose,  
From Orwell's brink, from Waveney or Ouse."

Thirty years later, William Cobbett, who from his farm at Botley sent the earliest lambs to the London market, expressed his rabid indignation that the fat oxen of Wilts were "destined to be devoured in the Wen"—his favourite name for the metropolis.\* The demagogue knew full well that the demand of the markets of London, and of other great cities, gave the natural impulse to the productiveness of the country; and that the greater part of "the primest of human food" was not there devoured by "tax-eaters and their base and prostituted followers." The profits derived in the olden time from Essex calves furnished the capital whose gradual increase gave Essex land-owners and farmers the means of draining their marshes, and of rescuing land from the sea. "It argueth the goodness of flesh in this country, and that great gain was got formerly by the sale thereof, because that so many stately monuments were erected anciently therein for butchers—inscribed *carifices* in their epitaphs."† Essex veal preserves its reputation, and so Essex oysters. Essex saffron is a thing of the past, though its former celebrity lingers in the name of Saffron Walden. The use of saffron as a condiment in fool has long been at an end; its value as a medicine is very equivocal. We now import the small quantity of saffron that we consume. The husbandry books of a century ago contain the most elaborate directions for its cultivation upon a large scale. Coriander, and caraway, and canary are extensively grown in the clay district of Essex; ‡ but the good roads, the coast navigation, and the vicinity to London give this county the full power to maintain its old superiority in producing the great staples of human food.

Several of the South-Midland counties have their records and traditional traces of old modes of husbandry, and of their accompanying manners, which strikingly contrast with the course of modern improvement.

Buckinghamshire had an ancient reputation for fertility. "A

\* "Rural Rides," 1830, p. 534.

† "Journal of Royal Agricultural Society," vol. v. p. 39.



fruitful country, especially in the Vale of Aylesbury," says Fuller. Arthur Young journeyed through this famous Vale a hundred and ten years after Fuller wrote, and found the husbandry almost as bad as the land is good. The wheat crops only yielded fifteen bushels per acre; the barley crops sixteen bushels. The poverty of the crops is chiefly imputed to the want of draining. Young expresses his surprise that the landlords have made no attempt at inclosing. "All this Vale would make as fine meadows as any in the world."\* It was very long before this county discovered that open fields, and large tracts of waste capable of cultivation, presented effectual barriers to improvement.† Nevertheless, many of the wastes of the Chilterns could not be profitably cultivated. But the long ranges of hills covered with beech—such as were the indigenous growth of the chalk in the earliest times—are picturesque to ride beneath, recalling the memory of Hampden and the stout yeomen who chose to fight rather than be taxed out of their liberty. Buckinghamshire is finding uses for the beech, in manufacturing cheap chairs, at the rate of a thousand a day, at High Wycombe and the neighbourhood. She is using up her resources, and getting rid of her nuisances;—administering the relief of the poor so as not to drive land out of cultivation; and extirpating the game, instead of having a fertile country little better than a large preserve, especially as it was once in one ducal domain.‡ The country has discovered that large dairy-farms are better than wheat crops of fifteen bushels per acre. Butter is now produced here as a great manufacture. It is held that there are 120,000 acres in Buckinghamshire devoted to dairying, on which, with the aid of some arable land, 30,000 cows are kept, producing annually the almost incredible amount of 6,000,000 lbs. of butter, chiefly sent to the London market by railway. It was stated before the Aylesbury Railway Committee that 800,000 ducks reared in the county, for the early supply of the all-devouring metropolis—a possible exaggeration. Butter and ducks will never want a ready market and command a fair price. The old Buckinghamshire trade of pillow-lace making—the "bone-lace" of former times—leaves "the free maids" to the miserable pittance of sixpence for a day's labour.

Oxfordshire cultivation was, a century ago, somewhat below the average of the inland counties. Its progress has not been very remarkable. The chief bar to improvement was the existence of large tracts as common field. There were few wastes. The cul-

\* "Eastern Tour," vol. i. p. 23.

† "Journal of Agricultural Society," vol. xvi. p. 406. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

ture of green crops and root crops has gone on, through not very rapidly. The farm buildings are generally old and inconvenient; the implements are of old fashion; the occupation roads are execrable. The large farmers are described as intelligent and industrious; but not so spirited or progressive as the tenantry of some other counties. The lesser yeomen too often "crawl on in the same track their ancestors jogged over a century ago." They have inherited the prejudices of former times, with their sterling qualities of industry and hospitality.\*

Fuller exults that his native county of Northampton has "as little waste ground as any county in England—no mosses, meres, fells, heaths." It was a county full of "spires and squires"—a grass country, where fox-hunting was carried to perfection by its resident gentry, and its graziers grew rich without much pains of cultivation. Arthur Young grows almost poetical in his contemplation of the large grazing farms. "The quantity of great oxen and sheep is very noble. It is very common to see from forty to sixty oxen and two hundred sheep in a single field, and the beasts are all of a fine large breed. This effect is owing in no slight degree to the nature of the country, which is wholly composed of gentle hills, so that you look over many hundred acres at one stroke of the eye, and command all the cattle feeding in them, in a manner nobly picturesque."† But in this bright picture there is a dark shade. The fine grass on the excellent soil is over-run with thistles, and is full of ant-hills; none of its wet places are drained; one-eighth of the whole is really waste land. The great improver exhorts the Northamptonshire farmers to get rid of rushes, ant-hills, thistles (which were regularly mown), nettles, "and all the et ceteras of slovenliness."‡ The arable husbandry was little better. The light land was considered only fit to grow rye—soils which now yield abundant crops of wheat. Common fields, with all their evils, were almost universal. Their general inclosure has made some local terms obsolete, such as "balk,—a narrow slip of grass dividing two ploughed or arable lands in open or common fields;" and "meer,—a strip or slip of grass land, which served as a boundary to different properties."§ As late as 1806, some tracts continued in this state of imperfect cultivation. In a Report of that year on the farming of the county, a celebrated locality is thus described: "From Welford, through Naseby, the open field extensive, and in as backward a state as it could be in Charles the

\* "Journal of Royal Agricultural Society," vol. xv.

† "Eastern Tour," vol. i. p. 54.

‡ Baker, "Northamptonshire Glossary."

§ *Ibid.*, p. 62.