

may be worth while to state shortly what the Royal Agricultural Society is, how it works, what good it has done, what its faults are, and how it may be made more useful for the future. The survey thus proposed is rendered the more appropriate at the present moment when the last decisive battle between Free Trade and protection is, with no doubtful issue, being fought to its close, and when some instruction may be derived by contrasting the fruits of a great political contest with the unostentatious labors of a body of men endeavouring to develop the oldest, the most necessary, and perhaps the greatest, of the useful arts.

The Royal Agricultural Society of England was incorporated in 1839 for a variety of objects. It was to embody such information contained in agricultural publications, and in other scientific works, as had been proved by practical experience useful to the cultivators of the soil. It was to correspond with agricultural, horticultural, and other scientific societies, both at home and abroad. It was to encourage experimental agriculture, to promote improvements in implements and in the construction of farm-buildings and cottages, to develop the science of agricultural chemistry, to ascertain the best means of eradicating weeds and of destroying insects injurious to vegetable life, to help the discovery and introduction of new varieties of useful plants, to raise the standard of education among the agricultural classes, to assist in improving the veterinary art, and to encourage the best modes of cultivation and the best breeds of stock, and, finally, to contribute as far as possible to the comfort and welfare of the laborer. It will be admitted that the society had a wide enough field of exertion thus opened up to it. Let us see how it went to work therein. Its operations may be collected from the privileges of membership (with a Journal published in half-yearly parts), the services of a consulting chemist, the town meetings of the council, at which lectures are read and discussions take place on all subjects of interest included within the scope of the society's charter, a library for reference, the annual country meetings, which include a show of stock and implements, and, finally, some advantages in connection with the Royal Veterinary College. The society may also claim such credit as is due to it for having promoted the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester—an institution which may yet prove of great value in supplying an enlightened body of land-agents competent for the care of those important interests with which they are intrusted. The college, however, has now no connexion with the society, and is merely mentioned incidentally. Of the different means thus adopted by the Society for the promotion of agriculture, the Journal is certainly one of the most valuable and successful. It has a circulation considerably in excess of the number of members in the society, notwithstanding that the gratuitous distribution to them raises the price to the

public to an exorbitant amount. In this last respect the arrangements do not appear to be at all on a satisfactory basis; and the Council, if they do not speedily make some change, may find private enterprise depriving them of a means of usefulness which cannot be too much. pryed. There are hundreds of farmers who would willingly become subscribers for the Journal if the sale of it had not been converted into a practical monopoly for the purpose of securing additional members. The price of each part is 10s., so that in the year the general public are mulcted for it as much as if they had joined the society. Of the value of this periodical in the information which it contains it is difficult to speak too highly. Its pages possess an interest which will often prove attractive to the least professional reader; and while visionary theories are rejected on the one hand, and the bigotry of routine discountenanced on the other, the successful applications of science to practice are elucidated with the greatest care and by the best authorities. Take, for example, the two parts issued last year as specimens. The first opens with an article on agricultural chemistry by Mr. Lawes, of Rothamstead, and Dr. Gilbert; Mr. Pusey writes an account of Mc Cormick's reaping machine, and Professor Way treats on superphosphate of lime, and Mr. J. A. Clarke gives an excellent account of the farming of Lincolnshire. In the second part, Mr. Lawes is again found recording an elaborate series of experiments on the comparative fattening qualities of different breeds of sheep. There is a very remarkable essay by Mr. Joshua Trimmer, on the Agricultural Geology of England and Wales—one which opens up an entirely unexplored field of science, and which, pursued in conjunction with Professor Way's researches into the different quality of soils, will no doubt yet throw very extensive light upon the practice of agriculture. The part concludes with a report, drawn up by Mr. Pusey, on the agricultural implements in the Great Exhibition. Copious extracts from that report were published in the *Times* when it first appeared, and the whole forms a most comprehensive statement of the valuable and increasing aids which the mechanical ingenuity of the age is so rapidly placing at the disposal of the cultivators of the soil. No person who refers to that report, or to the able lecture delivered on the same subject before the Society of Arts by Professor Wilson, can fail to be struck with the progress which has been made, and is still making, in this direction, and Mr. Pusey puts the practical results at once truthfully and well, when he says that "the efforts of agricultural mechanists have been in all the main branches of farming labor taken together to effect a saving on outgoings of little less than one-half;" that the new machines have, in addition to that saving, "the merit of very great cheapness," and that they "have given to farming what it most wanted, not absolute indeed, but comparative certainty." Look-