

LECTURE.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen :

Agriculture, commerce and manufactures, are the primary conditions on which our social system is based. Without the first, mankind must speedily assume the savage state in which the characteristics of the mere beast of prey would predominate ; where the softer and more humanising ties of our nature are relaxed, and where, failing the supply of wild beasts of chase, the genus homo would display the propensities of all carnivorous animals, and prey upon its kind. Causes similar to these have prevented the increase of savage nations, and compelled, by mere intuitive reason, the first step of advance, in the social scale, by banding the tribes of mankind together for self-defence. On the other hand, agriculture without commerce produces, as far as the diffusion of population is concerned, a nearly similar effect. That simple pastoral state so lauded by poets is the sole creation of a fervid imagination, unrestrained by practice and untrammelled by the common-place contingencies of actual fact. A nation solely devoted to agricultural pursuits will fail to expand into a great people. The history of God's chosen race is an exemplification of this fact ; their approximate census on their Exodus from Egypt was probably 3,000,000 of souls, and on their final dispersion, 1600 years afterwards, that number had not sensibly increased. One of the great causes of their isolation from the rest of mankind was the absolute necessity imposed by their law of judicial purification, which it would be impossible to observe to the letter if the nation had been a commercial people. When in the course of events the tribes became scattered abroad, the departure from the precepts of those Divine institutions, and the lamentable consequences to themselves, are to be found in the pages of their great Historian, Josephus.

All writers have endeavoured to discover in what country commerce was first practised. The oldest of all written records, the Bible, speaks of it as an act of every day life ; and the first authen-