

that this is another of the numerous cases in which the last improver is credited with the accumulated merits of his predecessor. But though the precise nature of what Mr. Coke effected is often misunderstood, the amount of his services has not been overrated. He stands foremost among the class of whom Arthur Young wrote in 1770—‘Let no one accuse me of the vanity of thinking that I shall ever by writing, wean farmers of their prejudices: all improvements in agriculture must have their origin in landlords.’ Five years afterwards Mr. Coke succeeded to the estates of the Leicester family. The fine house at Holkham, erected from the designs of Kent, about the middle of the last century, bears an inscription which imports that it was built in the midst of a desert tract, and its noble founder was accustomed to say, at once jocularly and sadly, that his nearest neighbour was the King of Denmark. There was still many a broad acre in its primitive state of sheep-walk, and Mr. Coke graphically described the condition of portions of the property surrounding this princely mansion by the remark ‘that he found two rabbits quarrelling for one blade of grass.’ His first care was to apply the existing methods to fertilising his barren wilds; his second was to improve on the prevailing practices; his third was to persuade his countrymen to follow his example. From the thirty years between 1760 and 1790 both landlords and tenants were content to follow in the track which Lord Townshend had marked out for them—a track which led to such wealth that it is no wonder they were not tempted to further experiments. Mr. Coke roused them from their lethargy, and what Young calls a second revolution, commenced. The great evil of the time was the isolation in which farmers lived. They were nearly as much fixtures as their houses, and what was done upon one side of the hedge was hardly known upon the other. The lord of Holkham instituted his annual sheep-shearing, at which he feasted crowds of guests from all parts and of all degrees. Under the guise of a gigantic festival, is was an agricultural school of the most effective kind, for the social benevolence engendered by such magnificent hospitality disarmed prejudice, and many who would have looked with disdain upon new breeds of stock, new-fangled implements, and new modes of tillage, regarded them with favour when they came recommended by their genial host. *Hot politician as he was, according to the fashion of those days, his opponents forgot the partisan in the agriculturist; and when Cobbet, who had no leaning to him, rode through Norfolk in 1821, he acknowledged that every one ‘made use of the expressions towards him that affectionate children use towards the best of parents.’ ‘I have not,’ he adds, ‘met with a single exception.’* The distinguished visitors who came from other counties to the sheep-shearings carried home with them lessons which had an effect upon farming throughout the kingdom.—Excluded by his political opinions from Court favour or office, Mr. Coke may have found abundant compensation in the feudal state of gatherings, at which, as a contemporary journalist records, ‘hundreds assembled and were entertained—farming, hunting, or shooting in the mornings—after dinner discussing agricultural subjects, whether the Southdown or the new Leicester was the better sheep—whether the Devon or the old Norfolk ox was the more profitable.’* In dealing with those who farmed under him, he showed the same wisdom as in his own tillage. He formed an intimacy with Young, and acted upon three of his maxims, on which agricultural progress may be said to depend—that ‘a truly good tenant-farmer cannot be too much favoured, or a bad one have his

*The Holkham sheep-shearing were evidently arranged by an eminently practical mind; and we have had nothing approaching them at the present day, unless it be in Easter week, a year ago, when Lord Berners, one of the pupils of Coke, entertained a party of farmers, with his tenants and friends, at Keythorpe Hall, where much-needed improvements have been transplanted from Norfolk.