

Agriculture, according to the Durham Professor—who should here be on his strongest ground—is as yet in its infancy in America. The system consists in exhausting the natural soil by a scourging succession of grain crops; then deserting the farm, and going on to fresh territories, which are exhausted and deserted in turn. In short, land is so cheap that it is more profitable to buy new fields than to manure old; so that nothing like proper restorative culture is practised. Accordingly, says he, the great wheat region is ever retiring farther and farther to the west; while some Atlantic districts, including the whole State of New York, have become comparatively used up, and only suffice to support their own population. Hence Mr. Johnston infers that there is no probability of the price of British produce being permanently depressed by the free importation of American wheat and flour. ‘My persuasion is, that year by year our Transatlantic cousins will become less and less able—*except in extraordinary seasons*—to send *large* supplies of wheat to our island ports; and that, *when their freshness shall have been rubbed off their new lands*, they will be unable, *with their present knowledge and methods*, to send wheat to the British market so cheap as the more skilful farmers of Great Britain and Ireland.’ A declaration so fenced with *irritant* clauses we have rarely encountered. What, in truth, does this proposition amount to? It is undeniable that America sends large supplies of wheat to our markets at present; and the Professor states his opinion, firstly, that it will continue to do so until the virgin freshness shall have been rubbed off its new lands, but no longer. Now, when is this likely to be? Not this century, anyhow—and if the Yankees manage to retain their whole territory even to the year 1900, they will certainly ‘go a-head *slick*’ in the interval. Secondly (not to mention the further exception of ‘extraordinary seasons’), the Professor admits that these large supplies of grain, even at that very remote and indefinite period, will only cease if the American farmers adhere to their *present methods*—in other words, if, when everything else in America is ‘going a-head,’ agriculture should stand still for half a century—an impossible supposition. Lastly, how *could* the present mode of farming be adhered to after the new lands are *exhausted*, when this system (depending, as it does, on the cheapness of land, and the desertion of old farms for new) cannot go on for one moment after the new lands are *occupied*?

Let us see how the matter actually stands. Accepting as correct the averment that the State of New York is not at present an exporting one, it is always to be remembered that this by no means applies to the Atlantic States generally—as it appears from one of the Professor’s own footnotes that Pennsylvania and Virginia