

VALUE OF FARMERS' CLUBS, ETC.

At the recent annual meeting and ploughing match of the Oxtou Farmers' Club (Notts), the Chairman, J. C. Nixon, Esq., said:—Such societies were important in every point of view. It was from unity of action by men brought together that the greatest results were achieved, and it was owing to the feeling which the men possessed who ploughed that day that they were working under the eye of their masters with whom they had been brought up, and whom they regarded with comparative affection—it was because they felt they were observed by their masters, or those who employ a like description of labour, that the work was so well accomplished. He was quite sure that it was from this unity of action they derived the amount of enlightenment which the country now possessed, as each derived advantages from consultation with others, and daily conversation. These societies, branches of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, had already produced great results, having conferred the greatest benefit on the manufacturers of beef, of mutton, and of the other kinds of food necessary for the sustenance of their fellow man while he trusted that at the same time, they had been attended with rich reward to the members. He did not know how this country could have got on had it not been for the unity of labour. Every man who benefited himself benefited the community also; they who did not neglect their duty, and *no man more neglected his duty than he who did not seek to cultivate the soil so as to produce the fruits of the earth in the greatest abundance. The cultivation of the soil was of the greatest importance, as it involved the employment of man's daily labour and the production of man's daily food*, and he who neglected the important task of making two or three blades of grass grow where only one grew before deserved to be discarded. He was like the man in Scripture who buried his talent, and was pronounced an unjust servant. But in referring to this class of persons, he was constrained to admit that there were very few of them in England. There was no place in England where the intellect of man was not engaged to bring about the most profitable result. For twenty five years and upwards he had been identified with agricultural matters in his business, and he had not failed to remark the advance which had been made and the wise use to which their talent had been applied by his agricultural neighbours. They had advanced considerably the welfare of their land, and had shed a halo around the domestic hearth. He dared to say that the agriculturists of this country had made a more marked advance in the social scale than the members of any other class of society. In making use of the word class he begged to be understood that he did not apply it in any offensive sense. Society should rather be one great family, and men and women should look upon each other as brothers and sisters. It was not possible that individual labour could accomplish such great results as men accomplished by unity. They could not improve their breed of stock, or make any great advance in agricultural

science, without its being made known to the world by the agency of the electric telegraph, the iron railroad, and the press, and now, happily, every man had an opportunity of benefiting by the experience of his neighbours whether he lived at home in England or at the antipodes. The man who made two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before obtains himself the advantage of it; but others are also advantaged by his success. It was in that light they should look upon themselves as members of the great universal family, assembled there for a great and grand object. He had long been accustomed to hear of the pre-eminence of the Oxtou farmers. The remark was frequently made in his hearing, "If you want to see good farming, go on Mr. Sherbrooke's estate." On that they saw one of the first principles of the unity of labour carried out to a successful result. Great results had been produced in the past, and he had no doubt that corresponding results would be obtained in the future. If they looked beyond the narrow limits of any particular society into the broad experience of the world, they would see that there was something to be learned from every one in the world, and they would experience the truth of what had passed into a homely proverb, that "two heads are better than one, even if one of them should happen to be a pig's." (laughter) He had made reference to class distinctions, and he could not perceive why there should be any between the manufacturer and the agriculturist. Theirs was a position of mutual dependence, and the difference only existed in the over-imaginative brain of some poor creature. It did not exist certainly in the intelligent mind; for every man of intelligence felt that there were two great sections of the human family, working for the benefit of all. The manufacturer could not prosper unless the agriculturist was doing well. Each was the customer of the other, and in this comparatively little island, blessed with the great and glorious privilege of mixed monarchical constitutional government, they should disclaim any attempt at disunion on any ground whatsoever. The next principle to be inculcated after that of the identity of classes was that of charitable feelings to all. When they got rid of the distinction of classes and acknowledged each man as a brother and as a member of the one great family, they had taken the initiative to that charitable feeling towards each other, which would not only enhance their comforts in this life, but add to their immortal happiness in the next. Societies such as that at which he had the honour of presiding were admirably calculated to promote charitable feelings, and on that ground were deserving of the best encouragement. It should also be remembered that when a man engaged at his daily labour was endeavouring to promote his individual benefit, he was also labouring for the advantage of the world. Intelligence, and that advantage which was the result of intelligence, like the bee, flies to the ends of the earth and leaves its sweetness behind it. It was impossible to destroy a good once done, and its fruits were everlastingly gathered.