

rotation, from growing two consecutive corn crops. Now, after a lapse of eighty years, the second Earl of Leicester wisely encourages his tenants to return to the once justly condemned system of two white crops in succession; because the soil that in 1770 was exhausted, has, by a long course of high-farming, been rendered almost too fertile.

A complete history of English agriculture from 1750, would comprize names worthy of record from almost every county, and the name of George III. would worthily appear at the head of the list. He had a considerable practical knowledge of the science, and contributed, under the denomination of Ralph Robinson, to Young's monthly periodical, 'The Annals of Agriculture.' His devotion to the pursuit did much to recommend it to others; and he is often fondly and proudly spoken of as 'Farmer George.' But no sketch can do justice to so extensive a subject, and, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, we have purposely confined ourselves to the tillage of Norfolk, which long led the van in agriculture improvement, and where nearly all the methods which stood the test of time were early adopted. The very labours seemed animated with the same spirit as their employers, for both Young and Marshall remarked that in no part of England did the workman display an equal activity. We now arrive at a period when Norfolk no longer occupies its old position, not because it has dropped behind in the race, but because other counties have pushed forward, and the course of events are tending to equalize the arts of cultivation throughout the kingdom. This last epoch is chiefly distinguished by the immense extension of drainage, by the discovery of artificial manures, by the increased purchase of food for cattle, by the improvement of implements, and still more by the improvement of those who use them. 'It is well known,' say Sir John Sinclair, 'that the best cultivated districts are those which possess the greatest facility of internal communication, without which, agriculture languishes in the most fruitful soil, and with it, the most ungrateful soil soon becomes fertile.' The effect which railroads have produced upon farming is a signal illustration of the justice of this remark, for without their aid the larger portion of the recent progress would have been impossible. They furnish cheap and rapid conveyance for goods which were too bulky to admit of free interchange in the days of horse-power—for corn and cattle, coal, iron and timber, implements and machinery, oil-cake and artificial manures—all that a farmer has to sell or wants to buy—and, above all, for the farmer himself, who brings home with him new ideas as well as new inventions. The railways practically converted distant rural parishes into the suburbs of towns, and thus inoculate them with a spirit of inquiry and commercial enterprise which could never have existed under packhorse or waggon communication. Wesley, who had a wide experience of the different classes in England, thought the tenantry the most ignorant, stupid, and unfeeling part of the community. 'In general,' he added, 'their life is supremely dull, and it is usually unhappy, too; for of all people in the kingdom, they are the most discontented, seldom satisfied either with God or man.' Wilkes said that, reversing Pope's Maxim, they held that 'Whatever is, is wrong.' Wesley, however, was mistaken both in supposing that husbandry was a dull occupation, and in imagining that the grumbling of the husbandmen, which was chiefly designed to keep down rents, was the real measure of their discontent; but, taken as a body, they neither read nor thought, were sluggish in their minds, and the slaves of an antiquated routine. The suddenness with which the many have displayed the aptitude which formerly was the prerogative of a few, is without a parallel in the annals of farming.

The starting point of the new era may be dated from the years 1837 and 1838, which were signalized by the foundation of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. This now famous association was suggested in a pamphlet published