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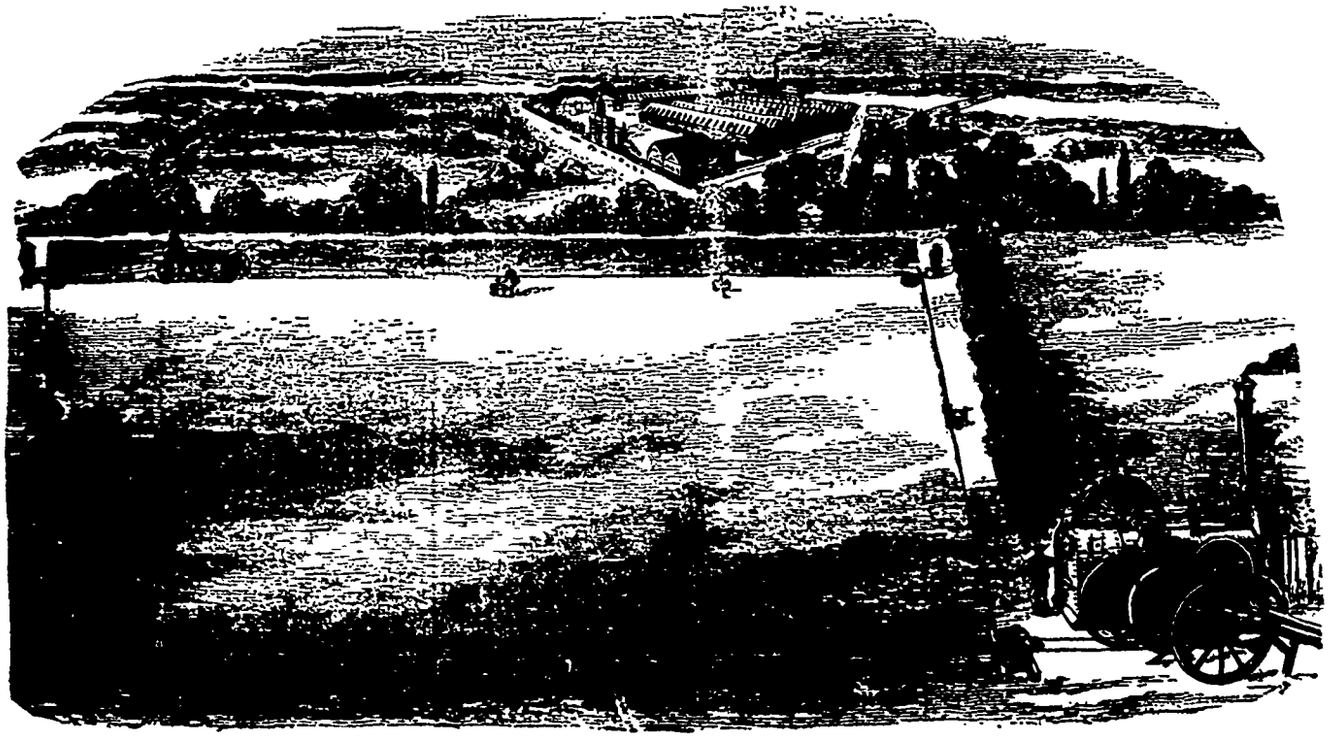
The Field.

Steam Cultivation.

We propose to devote a few articles to the illustration of the subject of steam culture. There can be no question but that the steam engine is now one of the great facts of agriculture. The circle in which its more immediate influence is experienced is daily enlarging, and those who once regarded it with indifference or contempt, are now disposed to view it in a very different light. Steam culture, at the present day, is one of the realized improvements of practical husbandry. That amazing sceptic, the British farm- has been silenced by the evidences of its rare utility and decided economy; and a great revolution in the farm practice of the "old country" may be fairly said to have commenced. This being so, we believe we shall be consulting the wishes of our readers by giving them some account of the growth and development of this invention, by which amazing results have already been achieved.



Steam ploughing is by no means a novelty, although, until a recent period, public attention had scarcely been directed to it. Long before the names of Fowler and Howard were connected with it, several patents had been taken out, and a variety of schemes had been tried. Some of the early pioneers of steam cultivation brought no small amount of inventive genius to bear on the solution of the problem, and spent some thousands of pounds in the futile attempt to make an economical substitution of steam for horse power, in the cultivation of the soil. So early as the year 1618, one David Ramsay and a Thomas Wildgosse, obtained a patent for "Newe, apte, or compendious formes or kindes of engines or instrumentes, and other p'fitable invencons, wayes, and meanes, for the good of our Commonwealth, as well as to ploughe grounde without horses or oxen, and to enrich and make better and more fertill, as well barren peate, salte, and sea sande, as inland and upland grounde, within our Kingdomes of England and Ireland, and our Domynyon of Wales." The farmers of that period would doubtless esteem the two patentees as hopeless Quixotic visionaries, and would probably suggest that the name of the latter should be altered to Wildgoose, as indicative of the absurdly impracticable nature of the scheme. The same genius, David Ramsay, took out other patents in 1630 and 1634, to work a "gynn or engine" not only to plough, but also to deposit manure and seed by steam power. Passing over three other inventors, whose uncouth names need not trouble us, we come to Francis Moore, who, in 1768, and following years, took out no less than three patents, having for their object "the dispensing with animal power in tillage, navigation, &c. When we are told by a periodical of the day that the inventor sold his horses as having no further use for them, and further persuaded his friends to imitate his example, we have a picture, not only of the sanguineness of the inventor, but of the confiding faith of his friends. Another inventor appeared about this time, in the person of Dr. Richard Lovell Edgeworth, father of the celebrated Maria Edgeworth. He patented an engine with "an endless railway," somewhat similar to that patented by the late Mr. Boydell.

We have neither space nor inclination to mention the long list of inventors that have each contributed in a greater or lesser degree to perfect steam ploughing apparatus. In connection with Mr. Heathcoat's system, patented about 1836, one fact may be mentioned, which is highly honorable to the foresight and public spirit of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland. In 1837, this Society offered a "premium of £500 for the first successful application of steam power to the cultivation of the soil;" and at the Society's Show held in Dumfries, during the same year, £100 in addition was subscribed, to pay the expenses of exhibiting and working "Heathcoat's Plough." The judges, although considering the trial to some extent satisfactory, did not feel justified in awarding the premium. The Society, however, continued to offer the prize until the year 1843. In 1851 Lord Willoughby D'Eresby showed at the Great Exhibition, in Hyde Park, London, a complete set of