

NOTES FROM AN OLD COMMON PLACE BOOK.

BY HON. ADAM FERGUSON, WOODHILL, C. W.

"O fortunatos, nimium sua si bona norint Agricolas."

"THE OLDEN TIME."

Dear Sir,—While you and other true-hearted Canadians enjoy the increasing prosperity of our noble Province, and firmly advocate unanimity and mutual forbearance, as the only pledges of eventual success, it may not be uninteresting to revert for a little to Agricultural matters in Britain during the earlier years of the present century, especially to features, then prominent, but which are not likely to appear amongst us.

I may premise, that in the following reminiscences, I shall probably not adhere over rigidly to the rules of composition, as regards *past and present*, but will be found sometimes quoting from my old notes, as matters actually passing, and again giving my recollections more as a narrative of things past.

About thirty years ago, I was domiciled in the County of Northumberland, Great Britain, where I enjoyed the benefit of living upon terms of cordial intimacy with the late Mr. Bates, and a large circle of distinguished agriculturists and breeders. It was a period of much agricultural prosperity (1813, 1814, and 1815) when an East Lothian farmer could point to stacks in his yard worth three or four hundred pounds a-piece, and butcher's meat readily fetched 1s. per lb. In 1022 it would take five stacks, same size, to reach that sum.

The sheep-shearing gatherings of Wobourn, Holkham, &c., shone in all their glory, bringing together thousands of the most enterprising, intelligent farmers of the land, and dispensing knowledge and zeal everywhere in copious streams.

Among the spirited landholders, who at an incredible expenditure of time, talent, and wealth, laboured in their praiseworthy vocation, no mean place was occupied by J. C. Curwen, Esq., of Workington Hall, long an active representative of the County of Cumberland in the British Parliament. My first visit to this patron of the plough, or perhaps I should, with greater propriety, say to his farm, was at his annual festival, held at Workington, in July, 1814. I had then no personal acquaintance with Mr. Curwen, nor did I bear any other introduction, beyond a mutual love of rural improvement.

My own residence was in Northumberland, in the vicinity of Hexham. I travelled by coach, *via* Carlisle, having sent on a saddle horse a day before. The weather was brilliant, but sultry, and the Cumberland farmers were in full progress with their hay. The grass is in general meadow, and the common system seemed to be, to get it, as fast as possible, into very diminutive cocks, not unlike inverted basins, and extremely liable (I should think) to take damage from rain, a visitation rather too frequent in the Western counties.

On the evening of my arrival, I sauntered up to the *Schoose*, Mr. Curwen's own farm, upon which he has erected an extensive and most commodious range of farm buildings. I found there Mr. Glover, a smart intelligent man, having a general charge of the live-stock department, and more especially of the milk cows, at present thirty-four in number, giving milk. These are all soiled, and never leave the stable.