

year There are no official data at Washington upon which the productive industry of the United States can be accurately calculated; and all the statements which have been put forth, professing to give precise aggregates of the various crops, are conjectural and without any means of verification."

To the statesman, the merchant, the farmer, the mechanic, the manufacturer, and indeed the men of every pursuit, reliable returns of the production and industry of a country are of the first consequence. They form the basis upon which a public policy should be directed and private interests governed.

Most of the European governments have, with a just appreciation of the value of statistics, taken extraordinary pains to establish a thorough system, extending to every calling, through which the completest and most detailed information is obtained every year. The examples of Scotland and Ireland show that there is no serious practical difficulty in organizing a system for obtaining early and reliable information with regard to the yield of the cereal crops. It requires but two leading requisites: first, intellectual comprehension, to grasp the subject in its large entirety; and next, the faculty of detail, by which its minute parts might be judiciously distributed over so large an area as the American Union presents, and embracing so many pursuits. A department or bureau on such a basis would materially reduce the cost of taking the decimal census besides furnishing materials for authenticating its most valuable results; and the people would thus be enabled to get some actual knowledge of the progress, resources and annual wealth of the country.

In the absence of these collective official data, we are left to glean from various commercial channels the figures calculated to afford any indications of the condition of the States.

Agriculture has made wonderful progress everywhere in the last quarter of a century, and especially in the United States. The Americans are now not only producing grain enough to supply their own rapidly increasing population, but have millions of bushels to spare. In the ten years between 1840 and 1850 the annual aggregate wheat crop of the United States was increased from 84,000,000 to 100,000,000 bushels, an advance of nearly 20 per cent.; but in 1855 it had further increased to 165,000,000 bushels, a larger ratio still.

In the new States the wheat crop is greatly on the increase, owing to the virgin soil of the country, and the large tracts of land which are annually cleared or broken up and brought under cultivation. In the middle States, where a favourable soil has been supported by careful tillage and suitable manures, the wheat crop has held its ground. But in the older States, wheat production may be said to be rapidly on the decline. Climate in the north-eastern States, and careless culture, with a general disregard of the wants of the soil, are among the most active causes for this decline.

Europe can no longer, under the increasing demand for comforts by the million, supply their food-wants: and an annual balance has therefore to be drawn from the countries across the Atlantic. The additional work to be performed by the United States long since exceeded the labouring force at her disposal; and a triumph of intellect over physical exertion was finally achieved by the inventive genius of the nation. Sowing, reaping, thrashing, and mowing machines have, according to the American journals, turned already, in the United States, a million of hands from the labours of the field and the barn to other kinds of employment, which, though necessary, would otherwise have been left undone. The entire value of the work produced by this million, while the newly-created machinery prepares the materials for their sustenance, is a clear annual gain to the country and to society at large.

In the invention and construction of labour-saving machinery to farming purposes consists the progress of the middle of this nineteenth century in agriculture: and, wonderful as the results appear, we stand as yet only upon the threshold of the new era of reform and improvement.

The United States may be divided into four characteristic geographical sections: 1. The large southern and south-western section, engaged extensively in the cultivation of the great staples of cotton, sugar, and rice, with Indian-corn as the principal element of subsistence. 2. The southern and south-western section, engaged principally in the cultivation of grain, tobacco and hemp, and the rearing of live stock, in which slave-labour is employed to a considerable extent, though not upon so large scale as in the first section.