

## THE PROGRESS OF ENGLISH AGRICULTURE.

*(Continued from Page 163.)*

A new system of fattening sheep, which has been attended with wonderful results, was commenced in 1824, on the suggestion of Mr. Coke's steward, Blaikie, by Mr. John Hudson, now known throughout England in connexion with his present farm of Castle Acre. He ventured to supply his young wethers with sliced turnips and purchased oil-cake. Such was the success of his experiment, 'that, to Mr. Coke's astonishment, when he asked to see the produce of his tup, he found they had been sent fat to market twelve months before the usual time.' Yet all John Hudson's neighbours, including his father, a man of agricultural progress, prophesied his ruin from his extravagance in buying food for sheep, which was regarded in much the same light in farming, as for a young spendthrift to go for money to the Jews. At the present day the purchase of linseed-cake, or meal, or foreign pulse, is one of the regular means by which an increased quantity of meat is manufactured. Wherever turnips are grown and sliced, there cake-troughs are to be seen, and the improved feeding, coupled with the natural tendency of the improved breeds to early maturity, has multiplied to an enormous extent the amount of mutton produced. Mr. Morgan states that twenty years ago the majority of the sheep brought to Smithfield Market were three and four years old, and it was difficult to find a score under two. Now a three-year old sheep is scarcely to be met with, and fat sheep only a twelvemonth old are plentiful. Besides the vast increase in the numbers kept, we have thus three generations got ready for our tables in the same space of time as we had one in 1838. Bought food would have been wasted on the former slow-growing species; but applied to the improved stock bred on Bakewell's principles, it created a demand not only for tups from Sussex, steers from the Quantock hills, and oilcake from Germany, but for improved implements and machinery—the turnip-slicer, the cake-crusher, the chaff-cutter, and the bone-mill, as well as the drill, horse-hoe, heavy roller, and better-contrived ploughs and harrows.

The Leicester breed was for some time adopted by Mr. Coke. He afterwards substituted the Southdowns as superior; and the perfecting of these in the present generation by Mr. Jonas Webb, may be said to have been due to one of those trivial circumstances that are always influencing the events of the world. His grandfather was a breeder of Norfolk rams, and it was the amusement of the old gentleman at his annual sales, to set his grandsons to ride on his tups, holding fast by their huge horns. It was during the races on these sharp-backed animals that Jonas determined, as soon as he was a man, to breed sheep with "better saddles of mutton." A lean, hurdle-backed, black-faced Norfolk ram, and the beautiful firkin-bodied Southdown, for which Mr. Webb refused five hundred guineas at the Paris Exhibition of 1856, are the two extremes, the two mutton-marks between the boyhood and manhood of the same individual. Nothing but the Norfolk sheep could have found a living on the uncultivated Norfolk heaths; nothing but the "roots," artificial grasses, cake, and corn of modern days, could have raised the Babraham "Downs" to their marvellous perfection.

Another instance of a different kind, and one in which extremes meet, marks the contrast between the past and the present. Mr. Coke's first agricultural adviser was a Mr. Overman, of Dutch descent, whose sons are still tenant-farmers on the Holkham estate, and prize-winners at Royal Agricultural and Smithfield fat-stock shows. The heads of the covenants were drawn, at Mr. Coke's request, by Overman, and only restrained tenants, in obedience to the famous Norfolk