

by it, but it is an undisputed fact that wheat can nowadays be profitably delivered in Great Britain at a lower price than it can be grown there. Years ago the sale of wheat was regarded by the British farmer as a means of setting his finances straight for the year, but now the wheat crop is grown more as a necessity in the rotation than for anything else.

The diminished capital which farmers hold renders it impossible for a great many of them to till their land in an efficient manner, and for that reason the best way for them to do justice to their holdings is by laying down a portion to grass. The best way of dealing with the agricultural labour question is an anxious one. Few farmers would object to pay the increase in wages were it possible in return to obtain as good a day's work from the men as their fathers gave for less money, but no such willing or efficient labour is now to be got. The labourer's children remain long enough at school to acquire a distaste for agricultural work, and disdaining the manual labour of rural life, they flock into the towns, leaving the sickly and infirm to work on the farms. So that, having paid an education rate in addition to their other heavy burdens, farmers find the cost of labour increased, and its efficiency lowered. To meet this difficulty the arable farmer must either invest in every kind of labour-saving machinery or lay down so much to grass as will reduce the labour bill as much as possible.

Political economists tell us that the creation of pastures is bad for the nation because the land does not produce so good a return in grass as it would under arable, and still more under spade cultivation, and also that there is less scope for the employment of labour on grass land than on arable.

Unfortunately, the question which the British Agriculturists have to face is not which system will produce most food and employ most labourers, but by which can land be farmed at a profit.

Surely, no one can be expected to till the soil at a great loss, just for the sake of the public benefit! The laying down of grass appears to be quite as much a question for landowners as for tenants. The farmer has a direct interest in promoting the movement, as a means of avoiding the deterioration of their land, and of attracting tenants to their farms.

There is no doubt that there are large tracts of land in the old country which are unsuited for the formation of permanent pastures because the finer grasses die out, and the soil gradually becomes filled with worthless varieties which are indigenous to it.

If a certain soil is unsuitable for laying down to permanent pasture, there is no reason why it should not be seeded down with artificial grasses for periods varying from two to five years, instead of breaking it up any sooner. This practice will ensure the storage in the soil of a large reserve of grain-producing energy ready for any emergency. At present the only hope for the English farmer of obtaining a profit from much of his heavy, strong land, is to grow grass permanently or in rotation, and turn it either into meat or milk. For milk alone there is a great future when the populations of London and other large centres better understand its value as an article of diet. There is great need in the old country for the establishment of butter and cheese factories throughout the country where farmers may combine to turn milk into manufactured articles at remunerative prices. It is said that even at the current low price of milk in England, a ton of milk is worth more than a ton of wheat and costs a good deal less to produce.

Beef and mutton can be more cheaply fatted, and milk more cheaply produced, on a farm of which one-half or two-thirds is in grass than on arable land alone. It may not be possible to fatten so many beasts or sheep per acre as when stall-fed on arable produce; but the point to be considered is, which pays the best, and so far as Great Britain is concerned, there is no doubt that meat and milk produced by the grazier will be more profitable than when produced by the farmer of arable land only.

WALTER S. G. BUNBURY,

Compton Model-Farm.