

which cover his ground with a barren sand. I know that prophets of future evil have at all times been derided by their own generation, but if history and natural law can furnish any ground whatever for a just conclusion, then there is none which stands upon a firmer basis than this: That if the British people do not take the pains to secure the natural conditions of the permanent fertility of their land, if they allow these conditions as hitherto to be squandered, their fields will at no distant day cease to yield their returns of corn and meat. Every man may picture to himself the state of things which will then gradually arise; but it does not belong to the province of natural science to decide the question whether the might and strength and independence of the nation can be maintained when this state of things shall have arisen.

Believe me, dear Sir,
Very truly and respectfully yours,

JUSTUS VON LIEBIG.

To J. J. MECHI, Esq., London.

THE EARLY ENGLISH AGRICULTURAL WRITERS.

(Continued from page 32.)

The lawgivers of the iron days of Cressy and Poitiers, had evidently an interest in other viands beyond mere beef and mutton, for in the act of 1363 (37 of Edward III., the statute of Westminster, made by the king, lords, and commons), we find that "for the great dearth that is in many places of the realme of poultrie, it is ordained that the price of a young capon shall not pass three pence, and of an old capon fourpence, of a pullet one penny, of a goose four pence, and in places where the prices of such vittailles bee less, they shall holde without being enhanced by this ordinance. And that in the townes and markets of upland, they shall be soulded at a less prise according as may be agreed upon between the seller and the buyer." This wise law was not repealed until the year 1624.

More than two centuries after this absurd poultry statute, we find the parliament imitating this necessarily abortive attempt to run counter to market prices, by an act to regulate the price of butchers' meat.—In the year 1532, by the 24 Henry VIII., c. 3, an act which was not repealed till the year 1541, it was declared in "an act concerning flesh to be sold by weight,"

that all beef, mutton, veal, and pork, should be sold by "haberdepois" weight, and moreover that no person should thereafter take "for any pound weight of flesh of the carcasses of beefe or porke, above the price of an halfpenny, and of mutton or veale above the price of one halfpenny and half farthing," and after endeavoring to enforce these prices by a penalty of 3s 4d, it gravely continued: "Provided alwaies that the heads, necks, inwards, purtenances, legs, nor feet, shall be counted no part of the carcasses aforesaid, but such to be sold for a lower price.

The parliament were not content with fixing the price of calves' meat; they even declared what a butcher should not kill; for instance, in 1529, we find in the old statute books (the 21st Henry VIII.,) "An Act against the Killing of Calves" for three years, because, as the framers of the Act gravely inform us, "of late yeeres now passed the breeders of such calves, of their covetous minds, have used to sel their calves young sucking to butchers, weining, rearing, and bringing up few or none, whereby the increase of old cattell is marvellously minished and decreased." A penalty of 6s 8d is then imposed upon any one who should kill a calf during the next three years.

As might be reasonably expected, the farmers evidently evaded this act very extensively. But the Legislature was not to be turned aside from their grave resolves; so in 1532, by the Act of the 24th Henry VIII., c. vii., after explaining in its preamble that the act of 1529 was intended to provide "that calves once wained should not be put to slaughter before they were of convenient yeeres and meete for beefe," but that since the last act divers bad persons had continued "to kill young beasts called wainlings, steers, bullocks, and heifares, of one or two years old, or little more," it goes to enact that no person shall, under a penalty of 6s 8d, cause any cattle to be killed under two years old.

Then, again, the same parliament had evidently discovered another mare's nest; they deemed the increase in the price of mutton to have arisen from the flocks of England having become too large; so, as usual with them, they were prompt in attempting the remedy of an Act of Parliament.

In 1533, therefore, the 25th Henry VIII. c. 13, is an Act entitled, "Concerning the number of sheep one should keep. After describing at some length the several enormities that do ensue by the greedy desire of having many sheep—some persons then