

these early English writers addressed their contemporaries is well worthy of our notice. They had evidently little faith in the effect of long arguments or half measures. Their works could only be known in manuscript. Printing was, in the days to which I refer, either unknown or merely rudely commenced. Our earliest authors therefore imitated, almost of necessity, the terseness of our early lawgivers, who practised brevity to admiration. Now it is in the statute books of England, Wales, and the sister-kingdoms, that we find some of the earliest notices of the agriculture of our islands. And it is not only an amusing but an instructive enquiry to trace in these laws the primitive notions of our ancestors with regard to husbandry—how bravely former English senates endeavored to teach farming by acts of parliament; tried to keep not only the prices of food below its market value, but of laborers' wages also; how they earnestly strove to protect his growing corn from vermin, from trespasses of all kinds, excepting game, and how they even endeavored to teach the men of those times what they should eat, what clothes they should wear, and in what rural sports they should indulge.

Their very limited knowledge of the true principles of political philosophy, indeed, more recent senates have not always exceeded, and modern parliaments have rarely equalled in their laws even the vigor of those of the Houses of Plantagenet and Tudor.

The reader when he is following me through some of these early legislative writings, must remember that in those days the population of England was in all probability not much larger than that of London now. That the country was undrained, ill cultivated, and that only the richest portions of the land were enclosed, commons and forests occupying the remainder. Of the produce of that portion under the plough, every notice which has escaped to us betrays the poverty. For instance in 1387, on the manor farm of Hawstead in Suffolk, 66 acres of wheat produced 69 quarters of grain, 26 acres of barley yielded 52 quarters 2 bushels of seed. And about the same period the manor farm of Dorking, in Surrey, produced from 30½ acres of barley 41 quarters 4 bushels of grain, 28 acres of oats only 38 quarters 4 bushels.

The writers whose works I propose to hereafter notice, are Greathead or Grotehead and Fitzherbert. But previous to this it will be well to take heed of the laws which before and during their time were made to regulate the proceedings of the farmer.

The value of his corn early attracted the attention of our parliaments. In a statute supposed to have been made in 1266, the 51st of Henry III., the municipal authorities of towns were thus directed: "First they shall enquire the price of wheat, that is to wit, how a quarter of the best wheat was sold the last market day, and how the second wheat, and how a quarter of barley and oats."

In 1360, by the 34th Edward III. c. 20, the exportation of corn was prohibited. It was 33 years after that time, that in 1398, by 17 Richard II., c. 7, all the king's subjects were allowed to export corn to any but the king's enemies. This act was not repealed till the year 1603.

In 1436, 15 Henry VI., wheat was allowed to be exported when it was 6s. 8d. per quarter at the place of shipment, and the preamble of the act indicates that the produce of wheat had increased beyond the demands of the population, since it says when alluding to the restrictions on the exportation of corn, "For cause whereof, farmers and other men *which use manurement of their land*, may not sell their corn, but of a bare price, to the great damage of all the realm."

It is evident from this statute that only some of the most enterprising farmers, then manured their corn land. Still they did not so increase the produce of grain as to render their country quite independent of foreign corn; for only a quarter of a century afterwards, we find the first symptom of protecting duties.

In 1403, by the 3rd of Edward IV., c. 2, it was declared that "the labourers and occupiers of husbandrie, within the realme of England, be daily grievously endamaged by bringing of corn out of other lands and parts, into this realme of England, when corn of the growth of this realme is at a low price." It then proceeds to enact that corn shall not, under pain of forfeiture, be imported into England, until wheat exceeds in price 6s. 8d. per quarter, rye 4s. and barley 3s.

Our old British ancestors long before this time had, however, absolutely prohibited the exportation of corn.

By the old laws of Wales, made certainly not later than the tenth century (*Ancient Laws and Institutes*, p. 655,) it was ordered that "three things are not to be conveyed to a foreign country, without the permission of the country and the lord—gold, books, and wheat. And three things that an ailt (alien) is not to sell without the permission of his proprietary lord, lest he should want to buy them of him—wheat,