

AGRICULTURE.

The following article from a popular periodical for February, will shew the turn of argument and speculation upon topics of deep concern to the people of England and her transatlantic colonies. It is said that observers at a distance may sometimes take calmer and perhaps clearer views of subjects which agitate the public mind, than those immediately engaged in the contest. It is probable at this time that the struggle of rival interests has commenced in Parliament, and it will soon be decided whether the corn laws are to be repealed, and with them the discriminating duties upon commerce, or whether the crisis will pass over and the struggle be renewed in a future season.

The children of the world are wise in their generation, but whether their wisdom will stand the test of time and experience, may be as problematical now as of old—perhaps their wisdom, such as it was, has even declined, as their affairs have become more complicated. First as to the Corn Laws: in 1815 they were imposed, and would have been clamoured down but for the landing of Bonaparte and the events of the “hundred days,” which drew off attention from them; and hence England in 1839 is under a tenancy at will, with ruined farmers, men of little Capital, and living from day to day, engrossing lands and throwing corn fields into pastures to lessen the cost of tillage, and proportionably diminishing the aggregate of food and employment, while population had been increasing.

Scotland did not feel the conversion of their tillage lands into sheep walks, because she had the markets of England open to her, and the districts which suffered were thinly peopled—still she *did* suffer: but a densely populous country like England would have felt the effects of such a change, even if the manufacturing districts had not to maintain a surplus population beyond those engaged in agriculture.

Thus also is there suffering in the west of Ireland, where pastures and wretchedness coexist, from the numbers being too great to be sustained from pasturage, a mode of occupancy which divides the profits between landlords and grazing farmers, and affords but a pittance to a few herdsmen.

In the tillage districts of Ireland, the small corn farmer or “occupying tenant” of from 5 to 50 acres, pays a fair rent and applies his capital to improvement: he is a thriving man, and his frugal habits help to secure his profits, enable him to pay his rent punctually, and to enjoy a premium from the English Corn Laws, which exclude the competition of the foreigner who pursues the same economical system. Secure in his *lease*, he pities the distressed English Farmer holding at the *will* of his landlord, envies not his teams of horses, his smart gates and fences and his other *refinements*, satisfied to drive his own plough, and to partake of the same homely fare with his labourers, which he is ever ready to share with the itinerant paupers of the pasture districts.

The abolition of the corn laws will not throw English corn lands out of cultivation, but will bring in a race of frugal, hardy, and industrious tenants, who will in like manner be able to pay rents, and under secure leases, apply their resources to tillage: the landlords, by encouraging a small tenantry will increase the products of the country; the occupiers of small farms will raise corn, and the occupiers of allotments will raise other produce, fruit, poultry, eggs, pork, &c., all which are now drawn from Ireland, France, and Belgium.

To the proprietor it cannot surely matter what his land produces if his income be secured, nor does the Irish landlord feel himself insulted by the well known remark in Ireland, that “the pig pays the rent.” The stranger instead of travelling through the green pastures of England and wondering *where* the people live, or passing through the manufacturing throngs and wondering *how* they live, will again behold in every district *homesteads* and *hedgerows* starting up, and crops of corn and fruits and varied produce; where instead of less than a third of the population living by labour on the land, which is the boast of the economist, the landlord will glory as of old in the number of his thriving tenantry; the great farmer ceasing to be jealous of the small occupier, and both striving to improve the resources of the country, not seeking the protection of corn laws, but applying adequate means to the tillage of the land and re-cultivating *with it* the hardy virtues of their yeomen ancestors. The rural districts thus open to the starving operatives, again exhibiting the loom in the cottage without interfering with the operations of the factory, but ready to supply additional hands to it when required, children breathing the fresh air of the country and growing up to vigorous youth and manhood instead of being enfeebled and morally contaminated.

Large farms and factories may have been a means of improving agriculture at a certain stage where intelligent enterprise required combination and great capital for experiment, but as rotation of crops may now be practised upon the smallest as well as the largest occupancies, there is no more reason for adhering exclusively to large farms than to large ships—and the same may be said of large factories.—It seems reasonable to allow all people to find out what best suits their circumstances, taking care that they always have sufficient means to do justice to the land they occupy, which is at once the interest of the landlord and the tenant.

One great change seems likely to ensue—twenty years ago there were estimated to be a million of agricultural horses in England consuming the produce of land that would feed five or six millions

of people, and it may be expected that human labour, and skill in abridging it, will prove in a great degree a substitute, when instead of the present clamour against threshing machines and other economical methods, men will be eager to possess these advantages, as a means of abridging their own labour. May we not also look for real freedom of trade in other things as well as in Corn, and an extension of the bonding system throughout the country, bringing goods to the door of the consumer and thus redeeming the merchant's outlay before duties are demanded of him, and lastly may we not hope that the re-occupation of the four millions of acres of enclosed commons valued at £60,000,000 sterling, and the rebuilding of 30,000 cottages pulled down by parish authorities, driving the peasantry off the lands into beer shops and work houses—may restore some of the lost comforts of the people, and effect that distribution of wealth which has been checked by the engrossing of profits, exhibiting the spectacle of a country possessing land, labour, and capital, without the means of rendering them reciprocally available till the capital flows into distant and hazardous speculations, enriching foreign soils, the people remain unemployed and starving, and the land waste or deficiently cultivated.

If capital were as plentiful as water we demand it not in torrents and floods which often devastate, but in descending dews and fertilizing showers.

That England, with her capital, her skill, enterprise and industry will with the blessing of Providence on her labours, become again an exporting country of corn, may be confidently predicted, but the manufacturer must not be pent up as in a besieged fortress on short allowance, and the agriculturist must have the markets of the world for *all* he requires, freely open to him—much is said of our national burthens—it is a relative term—the burthen is heavy or light in proportion to our strength to bear it: thus ten pence in the pound is a heavier charge to a distressed man than ten shillings to a prosperous one—if we would sustain our burthens we must give strength to our sinews by free exercise—the freedom of the money trade is one branch of it that must not be overlooked, and if the right use be made of the public credit, a safe means will be found of effecting that distribution which the country requires. The consideration of this branch of the subject and of the bearing of these important questions upon the prospects of the colonies must necessarily be deferred.

Extract.

TRADE AND COMMERCE.

PRODUCTIVENESS OF LOW DUTIES.

The mischief and hardship occasioned to the people of this country by high duties are incalculable. These high duties are imposed either with the view of raising revenue or of protecting some particular trade or class at the expense of the whole community. In as far as the first object is concerned high duties have signally failed, as the history of many commodities shews. Our limits only permit us at present to advert to one—coffee. Previously to 1732 the duty on coffee was 2s. per lb. in that year it was reduced to 1s. 6d. and the duty thence arising averaged for several years £10,000 a year.

The high duty however encouraged smuggling: and the consequence was that the revenue in 1783 had declined to £2869. In 1784 the duty was reduced to 6d., and the revenue immediately rose to £7,200, shewing an increase in the consumption of legally imported coffee of eight fold. In 1807 the duty was 1s. 8d., the revenue £160,000, in 1808 the duty was reduced to 7d., and the very next year the revenue rose to £245,856, or 50 per cent., and upwards of 8,000,000lbs. weight of coffee were consumed in 1809 more than in 1807. In 1819 the duty was again raised to 1s.—the consumption instantly declined 2,000,000lbs. below what it had been in 1817, and the revenue was under £400,000. In 1824 the duty was again reduced to 6d. the consumption increased by 3,000,000lbs. wt., and in 1831 the consumption was three times what it was in 1819, and the revenue £583,000, being 50 per cent higher with the duty at 6d. than with the duty at 1s. In 1836 the duty on East-India coffee was also reduced to 6d., and the total consumption last year exceeded £26,000,000 pounds weight yielding a revenue of £650,000, the consumption being now twenty four fold and the revenue four fold what they were in 1807 under the 1s. 8d. duty, and the population not having increased 50 per cent.

This places the injurious effects of high duties on the revenue in a striking point of view. But it may be said that the increased consumption of coffee must have led to diminished consumption of tea: and thus that the gain of the revenue on the one was balanced by the loss on the other. This however is by no means the case: for while the quantity of tea consumed in 1807 little exceeded 19,000,000lbs. weight, in 1833 it closely approached 32,000,000lbs. weight, and the revenue from it rose in the interval nearly half a million. There can be no doubt however that the duty on coffee is still much too high, and that it is adulterated with wasted rye,—and other articles to an immense extent. The profit on such adulteration is very great. It is only coffee of a very ordinary quality which can be purchased for 1s. 6d. per lb., while chicory, after paying a duty of 6d. per lb., is sold for 8d. and wasted rye cannot cost 2d. per lb. There is every reason to believe therefore that the reduction of this duty, which at present is equal to from 50 to 100 per cent, according to the quality or the value, would not diminish the revenue, as it would unquestionably tend not only to