

P R E F A C E .

It is not necessary to discuss the importance of Agriculture, or to indicate the necessity that impels us to seek means for its improvement. The circumstances connected with the progress of civilization and the increase of population, require increasing supplies of food and other products of the soil, for which mankind depends wholly upon agriculture, at least, in civilized countries.

In the early settlement of a country, and whilst the number of inhabitants is limited, a very defective system of agriculture will produce more than a sufficient supply of food. But with a large increase in population, the same imperfect system will no longer suffice. "The land must be better tilled, its qualities and defects be studied, and means gradually adopted for extracting the maximum produce from every portion susceptible of cultivation."

A large portion of Europe is in this latter condition. Within the past eighty years the population of Great Britain has more than doubled, and there has been a corresponding increase of agricultural products. The importation of food from abroad has formed, and continues to supply, a very small fraction of the consumption. There is no increase in the area of land, but by improved systems its products have been more than doubled.

In the older settled States of the Union, the exhausting systems of culture lessened materially the yield of the land, whilst the demand continually increased. And but for the bringing into cultivation the virgin soils of the West, we should scarcely be able in the old States to supply our existing population with food. Even as matters now are, we find that, with the exception of grain and flour, the average value of food, both vegetable and animal, ranges in the cities and in the thickly settled portions of the older States from twenty to one hundred per cent higher than was the case forty years ago.

It is clear, therefore, that production has not kept pace with population in the older States.