FRIDAY, AUGUST 27.

The PRESIDENT delivered the following Address:—

SOME of my predecessors in this Chair, whose duties as teachers of chemistry lead them to traverse a wide range of the subject every year, have appropriately and usefully presented to the Section a *résumé* of the then recent progress in the manifold branches of the science which have now such far-reaching ramifications. Such a course has, however, come to be of much less importance and interest of late years, since the systematic publication by the Chemical Society of abstracts of chemical papers in home and foreign journals as soon as possible after their appearance. Some, on the other hand, have confined attention to a department with which their own inquiries have more specially connected them. And, when the Council of the Association request a specialist like myself to undertake the Presidency of the Section, it is to be supposed they take it for granted that he will select for his opening address some branch of the subject with which he is known to be mainly associated.

But it seems to me that there is a special reason why I should bring the subject of Agricultural Chemistry before you on the present occasion. Not only is the application of chemistry to agriculture included in the title of this Section; but in 1837 the Committee of the Section requested the late Baron Liebig to prepare a report upon the then condition of Organic Chemistry, and it is now exactly forty years since Liebig presented to the British Association the first part of his report, which was entitled 'Organic Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture and Physiology;' and the second part was presented two years later, in 1842, under the title of 'Animal Chemistry, or Organic Chemistry in its application to Physiology and Pathology.'. Yet, so far as I am aware, no President of the Section has, from that time to the present, taken as the subject of his address the Application of Chemistry to Agriculture.

Appropriate as, for these reasons, it would seem that I, who have devoted a very large portion of the interval since the publication of Liebig's works, above referred to, to agricultural inquiries, should occupy the short time that can be devoted to such a purpose in attempting to note progress on that important subject, it will be readily understood that it would be quite impossible to condense into the limits of an hour's discourse anything approaching to an adequate account, either of the progress made during the last forty years, or of the existing condition of agricultural chemistry.

For what is agricultural chemistry? It is the chemistry of the atmosphere; the chemistry of the soil; the chemistry of vegetation; and the chemistry of animal life and growth. And but a very imperfect indication of the amount of labour which has been devoted of recent years to the investigation of these various branches of what might at first sight seem a limited subject will suffice to convince you how hopeless a task it would be to seek to do more than direct attention to a few points of special interest. Indeed, devoting to the purpose such leisure as I have been able to command, the more I have attempted to become acquainted with the vast literature which has been accumulated on the subject, the more difficulty have I felt in making a selection of illustrations which should not convey an idea of the limits, rather than of the extent, of the labour which has been expended, and of the results which have been attained, in agricultural research.

The works of Liebig to which I have referred have, as you all know, been the subject of a very great deal of controversy. Agricultural chemists, vegetable physiologists, and animal physiologists have each vehemently opposed some of the conclusions of the author, bearing upon their respective branches. But if the part which has fallen to my own lot in these discussions qualifies me at all to speak for others as well as myself, I would say that those who, having themselves carefully investigated the points in question, have the most prominently dissented from any special views put forward in those works, will—whether they be agricultural chemists, vegetable physiologists, or animal physiologists—be the first to admit how vast has been the stimulus, and how important has been the direction, given to research in their own department, by the masterly review of then existing knowledge, and the bold, and frequently sagacious, generalisations of one of the most remarkable men of his time!

Confining attention to researches bearing upon agriculture, it will be well, before attempting to indicate either the position established by Liebig's first works, or the direction of the progress since made, to refer very briefly to the early history of the subject.

From what we now know of the composition and of the sources of the constituents of plants, it is obvious that a knowledge of the composition of the atmosphere and of water was essential to any true conception of the main features of the vegetative process; and it is of interest to observe that it was almost simultaneously with the establishment, towards the end of the last century, of definite knowledge as to the composition of the air and of water, that their mutual relations with vegetation were first pointed out. To the collective labours of Black, Scheele, Priestley, Lavoisier, Cavendish, and Watt, we owe the knowledge that common air consists chiefly of nitrogen and oxygen, with a little carbonic acid; that carbonic acid is composed of carbon and oxygen; and that water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen; whilst Priestley and Ingenhousz, Sennebier and Woodhouse, investigated the mutual relations of these bodies and vegetable growth. Priestley observed that plants possessed the faculty of purifying air vitiated by combustion or by the respiration of animals; and, he having discovered oxygen, it was found that the gaseous bubbles which Bonnet had shown to be emitted from the surface of leaves plunged in water consisted principally of that gas. Ingenhousz demonstrated that the action of light was essential to the development of these phenomena; and Sennebier proved that the oxygen emitted resulted from the decomposition of the carbonic acid taken up.

So far, however, attention seems to have been directed more prominently to the question of the influence of plants upon the media with which they were surrounded, than to that of the influence of those media in contributing to the increased substance of the plants themselves. Towards the end of the last century, and in the beginning of the present one, De Saussure followed up these inquiries; and in his work entitled, 'Recherches Chimiques sur la Végétation,' published in 1804, he may be said to have indicated, if not indeed established, some of the most important facts with which we are yet acquainted regarding the sources of the constituents stored up by the growing plant. De Saussure illustrated experimentally, and even to some extent quantitatively, the fact that in sun-light plants increase in carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, at the expense of carbonic acid and of water; and in the case of his main experiment on the point, he found the increase in carbon, and in the elements of water, to be very closely in the proportion in which these are known to exist in the carbohydrates. He further maintained the essentialness of the mineral or ash constituents of plants; he pointed out that they must be derived from the soil; and he called attention to the probability that the incombustible constituents so derived by plants from the soil were the source of those found in the animals fed upon them.

With regard to the nitrogen which plants had already been shown to contain, Priestley and Ingenhousz thought their experiments indicated that they absorbed free nitrogen from the atmosphere; but Sennebier and Woodhouse arrived at an opposite conclusion. De Saussure, again, thought that his experiments showed rather an evolution of nitrogen at the expense of the substance of the plant than any assimilation of it from gaseous media. He further concluded that the source of the nitrogen of plants was more probably the nitrogenous compounds in the soil, and the small amount of ammonia which he demonstrated to exist in the atmosphere.

Upon the whole, De Saussure concluded that air and water contributed a much larger proportion of the dry substance of plants than did the soils in which they grew. In his view a fertile soil was one which yielded liberally to the plant nitrogenous compounds, and the incombustible or mineral constituents; whilst the carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, of which the greater proportion of the dry substance of the plant was made up, were at least mainly derived from the air and water.

Perhaps I ought not to omit to mention here that, each year for ten successive years, from 1802 to 1812, Sir Humphry Davy delivered a course of lectures on the 'Elements of Agricultural Chemistry,' which were first published in 1813, were finally revised by the author for the fourth edition in 1827, but have gone through several editions since. In those lectures, Sir Humphry Davy passed in review and correlated the then existing knowledge, both practical and scientific, bearing upon agriculture. He treated of the influences of heat and light; of the organisation of plants; of the difference, and the change, in the chemical composition of their different parts; of the sources, composition, and treatment of soils; of the composition of the atmosphere, and its influence on vegetation; of the composition and the action of manures; of fermentation and putrefaction; and finally of the principles involved in various recognised agricultural practices.

With the exception of these discourses of Sir Humphry Davy, the subject seems to have received comparatively little attention, nor was any important addition made to our knowledge in regard to it, during the period of about thirty years, from the date of the appearance of De Saussure's work in 1804 to that of the commencement of Boussingault's investigations.[1]

About 1834, Boussingault became, by marriage, joint proprietor with his brother-in-law of the estate of Bechelbronn, in Alsace. His brother-in-law, M. Lebel, was both a chemical manufacturer and an intelligent practical farmer, accustomed to use the balance for the weighing of manures, crops, and cattle. Boussingault seems to have applied himself at once to chemico-agricultural research; and it was under these conditions of the association of 'practice with science' that the first laboratory on a farm was established.

From this time forward, Boussingault generally spent about half the year in Paris, and the other half in Alsace; and he has continued his scientific labours, sometimes in the city, and sometimes in the country, up to the present time. His first important contribution to agricultural chemistry was made in 1836, when he published a paper on the amount of nitrogen in different foods, and on the equivalence of the foods, founded on the amounts of nitrogen they contained; and he compared the results so arrived at with the estimates of others founded on actual experience. Although his conclusions on the subject have doubtless undergone modification since that time, the work itself marked a great advance on previously existing knowledge, and modes of viewing the question.

In 1837, Boussingault published papers—on the amount of gluten in different kinds of wheat; on the influence of the clearing of forests on the diminution of the flow of rivers; and on the meteorological influences affecting the culture of the vine. In 1838 he published the results of an elaborate research on the principles underlying the value of a rotation of crops. He determined by analysis the composition, both organic and inorganic, of the manures applied to the land, and of the crops harvested. In his treatment of the subject he evinced a clear perception of the most important problems involved in such an inquiry; some of which, with the united labours of himself and many other workers, have scarcely yet received an undisputed solution.

Thus, in the same year (1838), he published the results of an investigation on the question whether plants assimilate the free or uncombined nitrogen of the atmosphere; and although the analytical methods of the day were inadequate to the decisive settlement of the point, his conclusions were in the main those which much subsequent work of his own, and much of others also, has served to confirm.

As a further element of the question of the chemical statistics of a rotation of crops, Boussingault determined the amount and composition of the residues of various crops; also the amount of constituents consumed in the food of a cow and

[1] Some reference should have been made in the text to the labours and writings of Dr. Carl Sprengel, late Professor of Agriculture at Brunswick, who made numerous analyses of agricultural materials, and published numerous papers in connection with Agricultural Chemistry, during a series of years, commencing about 1826.

of a horse respectively, and yielded in the milk and excretions of the cow, and in the excretions of the horse. Here, again, the exigencies of the investigation he undertook were beyond the reach of the known methods of the time. Indeed, rude as the art of agriculture is generally considered to be, the scientific elucidation of its practices requires the most refined, and very varied, methods of research; and a characteristic of the work of Boussingault may be said to be, that he has frequently had to devise methods suitable to his purpose, before he could grapple with the problems before him.

In 1839, chiefly in recognition of his important contributions to agricultural chemistry, Boussingault was elected a member of the Institute; and in 1878, thirty-nine years later, the Council of the Royal Society awarded to him the Copley Medal, the highest honour at their disposal, for his numerous and varied contributions to science, but especially for those relating to agriculture.

The foregoing brief historical sketch is sufficient to indicate, though but in broad outline, the range of existing knowledge on the subject of agricultural chemistry prior to the appearance of Liebig's memorable work in 1840. It will be seen that some very important and indeed fundamental facts had already been established in regard to vegetation, and that Boussingault had not only extended inquiry on that subject, but he had brought his own and previous results to bear upon the elucidation of long-recognised agricultural practices. There can be no doubt that the data supplied by his researches contributed important elements to the basis of established facts upon which Liebig founded his brilliant generalisations. Accordingly, in 1841, Dumas and Boussingault published, jointly, an essay which afterwards appeared in English under the title of 'The Chemical and Physiological Balance of Organic Nature;' and, in 1843, Boussingault published a larger work, which embodied the results of many of his own previous original investigations.

But there can be no doubt that the appearance of Liebig's two works, which were contributions made in answer to a request submitted to him by the committee of this Section of the British Association, constituted a very marked epoch in the history of the progress of agricultural chemistry. In the treatment of his subject he not only called to his aid the previously existing knowledge directly bearing upon it, but he also turned to good account the more recent triumphs of organic chemistry, many of which had been won in his own laboratory. Further, a marked feature of his expositions was the adoption of what may be called the *statistical* method—I use the word statistical rather than quantitative, as the latter expression has its own technical meaning among chemists, which is not precisely what I wish to convey.

It seems that, notwithstanding the conclusive evidence afforded by the direct experiments of De Saussure and his predecessors, vegetable physiologists continued to hold the view that the humus of the soil was the source of the carbon of vegetation. Not only did Liebig give full weight to the evidence of the experiments of De Saussure and others, and illustrate the possible or probable transformations within the plant by facts already established in organic chemistry, but he demonstrated the utter impossibility of humus supplying the amount of carbon assimilated over a given area. He pointed out that humus itself was the product of previous vegetable growth, and that it could not therefore be an original source of carbon; and that, from the degree of its insolubility, either in pure water or in water containing alkaline or earthy bases, only a small portion of the carbon assimilated by plants could be derived from the amount of humus that could possibly enter the plant in solution. He maintained that, so far as humus was beneficial to vegetation at all, it was only by its oxidation, and a consequent supply of carbonic acid within the soil; a source which he considered only of importance in the early stages of the life of a plant, and before it had developed and exposed a sufficient amount of green surface to the atmosphere to render it independent of soil supplies of carbonic acid.

With regard to the hydrogen of plants, at any rate that portion of it contained in their non-nitrogenous products, he maintained that its source must be water; and that the source of the oxygen was either that contained in carbonic acid or that in water.

With regard to the nitrogen of vegetation, both from the known characters of free nitrogen, and as he considered a legitimate deduction from direct experiments, he argued that plants did not take up free or uncombined nitrogen, either from the atmosphere, or dissolved in water and so absorbed by the roots. The source of the nitrogen of vegetation was, he maintained, ammonia; the product of the putrefaction of one generation of plants and animals affording a supply for its successors. He pointed out that, in the case of a farm receiving nothing from external sources, and selling off certain products, the amount of nitrogen in the manure derived by the consumption of some of the vegetable produce on the farm itself, together with that due to the refuse of the crops, must always be less than was contained in the crops grown; and he concluded that though the quantity so returned to the land was important, a main source of the nitrogen assimilated over a given area was that brought down from the atmosphere in rain.

There can be no doubt that, owing to the limited and defective experimental evidence then at command on the point, Liebig at that time (as he has since) greatly over-estimated the amount of ammonia available to vegetation from that source. In Boussingault's *réclamation* already referred to, he gave much more prominence to the importance of the nitrogen of manures. In Liebig's next edition (in 1843) he combated the notion of the relative importance of the nitrogen of manures; maintained, in opposition to the view put forward in his former edition, that the atmosphere afforded a sufficient supply of nitrogen for cultivated as well as for uncultivated plants; that the supply was sufficient for the cereals as well as for leguminous plants; that it was not necessary to supply nitrogen to the former; and he insisted very much more strongly than formerly on the relative importance of the supply of the incombustible, or, as he designated them, the 'inorganic' or 'mineral,' constituents.

As to the incombustible or mineral constituents themselves, Liebig adduced many illustrations in proof of their essentialness. He called attention to the variation in the composition of the ash of plants grown on different soils; and he assumed a greater degree of mutual replaceability of one base by another, or of one acid by another, than could be now admitted. He traced the difference in the mineral composition of different soils to that of the rocks which had been their source; and he seems to have been led by the consideration of the gradual action of '*weathering*,' in rendering available the otherwise locked-up stores, to attribute the benefits of fallow exclusively to the increased supply of the incombustible constituents which would, by its agency, be brought into a condition in which they could be taken up by plants.

The benefits of an alternation of crops Liebig considered to be in part explained by the influence of the excreted matters from one description of crop upon the growth of another. He did not attach weight to the assumption that such matters would be directly injurious to the same description of crop; but he supposed rather that the matters excreted were those which the plant did not need, and would therefore be of no avail to the same description of plant, but would be of use to another. He, however, attributed much of the benefits of a rotation to different mineral constituents being required from the soil by the respective crops.

Treating of manure, he laid the greatest stress on the return by it of the potass and the phosphates removed by the crops. But he also insisted on the importance of the nitrogen, especially that in the liquid excretions of animals, and condemned the methods of treatment of animal manures by which the ammonia was allowed to be lost by evaporation. It is curious and significant, however, that some of the passages in his first edition, in which he the most forcibly urges the value of the nitrogen of animal manures, are omitted in the third and fourth editions.

The discussion of the processes of fermentation, decay, and putrefaction, and that of poisons, contagions, and miasms, constituted a remarkable and important part of Liebig's first report. It was the portion relating to poisons, contagions, and miasms that he presented to this Section as an instalment, at the meeting of the Association held at Glasgow in 1840. It was in the chapters relating to the several subjects here enumerated that he developed so prominently his views on the influence of contact in inducing chemical changes. He cited many known transformations, other than those coming under either of the heads in question, in illustration of his subject; and he discussed with great clearness the different conditions occurring, and the different results obtained, in various processes—such as the different modes of fermenting beer, the fermentation of wine from different kinds of grapes, the production of acetic acid, &c. As is well known, he claimed a purely chemical explanation for the phenomena involved in fermentation. He further maintained that the action of contagions was precisely similar. In his latest writings on the subject (in 1870), he admits some change of view; but it is by no means easy to decide exactly how much or how little of modification he would wish to imply.

Liebig's second report, presented at the meeting of this Association in 1842, and published under the title of 'Animal Chemistry, or Organic Chemistry in its applications to Physiology and Pathology,' perhaps excited even more attention than his first, and, probably from the manner as much as from the matter, aroused a great deal of controversy, especially among physiologists and physicians. Liebig was severe upon what he considered to be a too exclusive attention to morphological characters in physiological research, and at any rate too little attention to chemical phenomena, and, so far as these were investigated, an inadequate treatment of the subject according to strictly quantitative methods.

He combated the view that nervous action, as such, could be a source of any of the heat of the body; and he adduced numerous illustrations and calculations in support of the view that the combustion of carbon and hydrogen in the system was sufficient to account for, and was the only source of, animal heat.

He compared and contrasted the general composition of plants and animals. In accordance with Mulder, he pointed out that whilst plants formed the nitrogenous bodies which they contain from carbonic acid, water, and ammonia, animals did not produce them, but received them ready-formed in their vegetable food; that, in fact, the animal begins only where the plant ends. But, going beyond Mulder, and beyond what had then, or has since, been established, he maintained the identity in composition of the admittedly analogous nitrogenous compounds in plants and in the blood of animals.

Omitting the fat which the carnivora might receive in the animals they consumed, he stated the characteristic difference between the food of carnivora and herbivora to be, that the former obtained the main proportion of their respiratory material from the waste of tissue; whilst the latter obtained a large amount from starch, sugar, &c. These different conditions of life accounted for the comparative leanness of carnivora and fatness of herbivora.

He maintained that the vegetable food consumed by herbivora did not contain anything like the amount of fat which they stored up in their bodies; and he showed how nearly the composition of fat was obtained by the simple elimination of so much oxygen, or of oxygen and a little carbonic acid, from the various carbohydrates. Much less oxygen would be required to be eliminated from a quantity of fibrine, &c., containing a given amount of carbon, than from a quantity of carbohydrates containing an equal amount of carbon. The formation of fatty matter in plants was of the same kind; it was the result of a secondary action, starch being first formed from carbonic acid and water.

He concluded from the facts adduced that the food of man might be divided into the *nitrogenised* and the *non-nitrogenised* elements. The former were capable of conversion into blood, the latter incapable of such transformation. The former might be called the *plastic elements of nutrition*, the latter *elements of respiration*. From the plastic elements, the membranes and cellular tissue, the nerves and brain, cartilage, and the organic part of bones, could be formed; but the plastic substance must be received ready-made. Whilst gelatine or chondrine was derived from fibrine or albumen, fibrine or albumen could not be reproduced from gelatine or chondrine. The gelatinous tissues suffer progressive alteration under the influence of oxygen, and the materials for their re-formation must be restored from the blood. It might, however, be a question whether gelatine taken in food might not again be converted into cellular tissue, membrane, and cartilage, in the body.

At that time, adopting and attaching great importance to Mulder's views in regard to proteine, he says:—'All the organic nitrogenised constituents of the body, how different soever they may be in composition, are derived from proteine. They are formed from it by the addition or subtraction of the elements of water or of oxygen, and by resolution into two or more compounds.'

He seeks to trace the changes occurring in the conversion of the constituents of food into blood, of those of blood into the various tissues, and of these into the secretions and excretions.

He states that the process of chymification takes place in virtue of a purely chemical action, exactly similar to those processes of decomposition or transformation which are known as putrefaction, fermentation, or decay. Thus, the clear gastric juice contains a substance in a state of transformation, by the contact of which with the insoluble constituents of the food they are rendered soluble, no other element taking any share in the action excepting oxygen and the elements of water. All substances which can arrest the phenomena of fermentation and putrefaction in liquids, also arrest digestion when taken into the stomach. Putrefying blood, white of egg, flesh, and cheese produce the same effects in a solution of sugar as yeast or ferment; the explanation being, that ferment, or yeast, is nothing but vegetable fibrine, albumen, or caseine, in a state of decomposition.

Referring to the derivation of the animal tissues, he says they all contain, for a given amount of carbon, more oxygen than the nitrogenous constituents of blood. In hair and gelatinous membrane there is also an excess of nitrogen and hydrogen, and in the proportions to form ammonia. We may suppose an addition of these elements, or a subtraction of carbon, the amount of nitrogen remaining the same. The gelatinous substance is not a compound of proteine; it contains no sulphur, no phosphorus; and it contains more nitrogen, or less carbon, than proteine.

He next, as he says, attempts to develop analytically the principal metamorphoses which occur in the animal body. He adds that the results have surprised himself no less than they will others, and have excited in his own mind the same doubts as others will conceive. He nevertheless gives them, because he is convinced that the method by which they have been obtained is the only one by which we can hope to acquire an insight into the nature of organic processes.

Referring to the animal secretions, he argues that they must contain the products of the metamorphosis of the tissues. He says a starving man with severe exertion secretes more urea than the most highly fed individual in a state of rest; and he combats the idea that the nitrogen of the food can pass into urea without having previously become part of an organised tissue.

Having shown the chemical relations of bile and urine to the proteine bodies, he illustrates, by formulæ, the connection between allantoine and the constituents of the urine of animals that respire. He insists that in the herbivora the carbohydrates must take part in the formation of bile; and he calculates the number of equivalents of proteine, starch, oxygen, and water, which would yield a given number of equivalents of urea, choleic acid, ammonia, and carbonic acid. The non-nitrogenous constituents in the food of the herbivora retard the metamorphosis of the nitrogenous bodies, rendering this less rapid than in the carnivora. It may be said that proteine, starch, and oxygen give the secretions and excretions—carbonic acid by the lungs, urea and carbonate of ammonia by the kidneys, choleic acid by the liver. It is the study of the phenomena which accompany the metamorphoses of the food in the organism, the discovery of the share which the atmosphere and the elements of water take in these changes, by which we shall learn the conditions necessary for the production of a secretion or of an organised part.

He traces the possible formation of taurine from caffeine or asparagine by their assumption of oxygen and of the elements of water. And from the composition of the vegetable alkaloids he suggests the possibility of their taking a share in the formation of new, or the transformation of existing, brain and nervous matter.

Finally, in reference to these various illustrations and considerations, he says, however hypothetical they may appear, they deserve attention in so far as they point out the way which chemistry must pursue if she would really be of service to physiology and pathology. Chemistry, he says, relates to the conversion of food into the various tissues and secretions, and to their subsequent metamorphosis into lifeless compounds.

After this lapse of time, it will certainly be granted that, quite irrespectively of the admissibility or otherwise of the particular illustrations adduced, or of the truth or error of any of the conclusions drawn—and some at least are so true that they seem to us now all but truisms, and you may be disposed to ask me why I should tell you over again a story so often told before—there is no doubt that Liebig's manner of treating the subject did exert an immense influence, by stimulating investigation, by fixing attention on the points to be investigated, and on the methods that must be followed, and thus, by leading to the establishment or the correction of any special views he put forward, and to a vast extension of our knowledge on the complicated questions involved.

In the third part of Liebig's second volume he treats of the phenomena of motion in the animal organism. It is to his views in regard to one aspect only of this very wide and very complicated subject that I propose to call your attention here, as it is chiefly in so far as that aspect is concerned that the question is of interest from the point of view of the agricultural chemist. He says:—

'We observe in animals that the conversion of food into blood, and the contact of the blood with the living tissues, are determined by a mechanical force, whose manifestation proceeds from distinct organs, and is effected by a distinct system of organs, possessing the property of communicating and extending the motion which they receive. We find the power of the animal to change its place and to produce mechanical effects by means of its limbs dependent on a second similar system of organs or apparatus.'

He points out that the motion of the animal fluids proceeds from distinct organs (as, for example, that of the blood from the heart), which do not generate the force in themselves, but receive it from other parts by means of the nerves; the limbs also receive their moving force in the same way. He adds: 'Where nerves are not found, motion does not occur.' Again:—

'As an immediate effect of the manifestation of mechanical force, we see that a part of the muscular substance loses its vital properties, its character of life; that this portion separates from the living part, and loses its capacity of growth and its power of resistance. We find that this change of properties is accompanied by the entrance of a foreign body (oxygen) into the composition of the muscular fibre. . . ; and all experience proves that this conversion of living muscular fibre into compounds destitute of vitality is accelerated or retarded according to the amount of force employed to produce motion.' He adds that a rapid transformation of muscular fibre determines a greater amount of mechanical force, and that conversely a greater amount of mechanical motion determines a more rapid change of matter.

'The change of matter, the manifestation of mechanical force, and the absorption of oxygen, are, in the animal body, so closely connected with each other that we may consider the amount of motion and the quantity of living tissue transformed as proportional to the quantity of oxygen inspired and consumed in a given time by the animal.' Again:—

'The production of heat and the change of matter are closely related to each other; but although heat can be produced in the body without any change of matter in living tissues, yet the change of matter cannot be supposed to take place without the co-operation of oxygen.'

Further, on the same point:—'The sum of force available for mechanical purposes must be equal to the sum of the vital forces of all tissues adapted to the change of matter. If, in equal times, unequal quantities of oxygen are consumed, the result is obvious in an unequal amount of heat liberated, and of mechanical force. When unequal amounts of mechanical force are expended, this determines the absorption of corresponding and unequal quantities of oxygen.'

Then, more definitely still, referring to the changes which take place coincidently with the exercise of force, and to the demands of the system for repair accordingly, he says:—

'The amount of azotised food necessary to restore the equilibrium between waste and supply is directly proportional to the amount of tissues metamorphosed. The amount of living matter, which in the body loses the condition of life, is, in equal temperatures, directly proportional to the mechanical effects produced in a given time. The amount of tissue metamorphosed in a given time may be measured by the quantity of nitrogen in the urine. The sum of the mechanical effects produced in two individuals, in the same temperature, is proportional to the amount of nitrogen in their urine, whether the mechanical force has been employed in the voluntary or involuntary motions, whether it has been consumed by the limbs, or by the heart and other viscera.'

Thus, apparently influenced by the physiological considerations which have been adduced, and notwithstanding in some passages he seemed to recognise a connection between the total quantity of oxygen inspired and consumed and the quantity of mechanical force developed, Liebig nevertheless very prominently insisted that the amount of muscular tissue transformed—the amount of nitrogenous substance oxidated—was the measure of the force generated. He accordingly distinctly draws the conclusion that the requirement for the azotised constituents of food will be increased in proportion to the increase in the amount of force expended.

It will be obvious that the question whether in the feeding of animals for the exercise of mechanical force—that is, for their labour—the demands of the system will be proportionally the greater for an increased supply of the nitrogenous or of the non-nitrogenous constituents of food, is one of considerable interest and practical importance. To this point I shall have to refer further on.

So far, I have endeavoured to convey some idea of the state of knowledge on the subject of the chemistry of agriculture prior to the appearance of Liebig's first two works bearing upon it, and also briefly to summarise the views he then enunciated in regard to some points of chief importance. Let us next try to ascertain something of the influence of his teaching.

Confining attention to agricultural research, it may be observed that in 1843—that is, very soon after the appearance of the works in question—the Royal Agricultural Society of England first appointed a consulting chemist. At that date Dr. Lyon Playfair was elected; in 1848, Professor Way; and in 1858 Dr. Voelcker, who continues to hold the office with much advantage to that union of '*Practice with Science*' which the Society by its motto recognises as so essential to progress Also in 1843 there was established the Chemico-Agricultural Society of Scotland, which was, I believe, broken up, after it had existed between four and five years, because its able chemist, the late Professor Johnston, failed to find a remedy for the potato disease. In 1845, the Chemico-Agricultural Society of Ulster was established, and appointed as its chemist, Professor Hodges, who still ably performs the duties of the office. Lastly, the very numerous '*Agricultural Experimental Stations*' which have been established, not only in Germany, but in most Continental States, owe their origin directly to the writings, the teachings, and the influence of Liebig. The movement seems to have originated in Saxony, where Stöckhardt had already stimulated interest in the subject by his lectures and his writings. After some correspondence, in 1850-1, between the late Dr. Crucius and others on the one side, and the Government on the other, the first so-called *Agricultural Experimental Station* was established at Möchern, near Leipzig, in 1851-2. In 1877, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of that institution was celebrated at Leipzig, when an account (which has since been published) was given of the number of stations then existing, of the number of chemists engaged, and of the subjects which had been investigated. From that statistical statement we learn that in 1877 the number of stations was:—

In the various German States	74
In Austria	16
In Italy	10
In Sweden	7
In Denmark	1
In Russia	3
In Belgium	3
In Holland	2

Brought forward	116
In France	2
In Switzerland	3
In Spain	1
Total	122

Besides these 122 stations on the Continent of Europe, the United States are credited with 1, and Scotland also with 1.

Each of these stations is under the direction of a chemist, frequently with one or more assistants. One special duty of most of them is what is called manure- or seed- or feeding-stuff-control; that is, to examine or analyse, and report upon such substances in the market; and it seems to have been found the interest of dealers in these commodities to submit their proceedings to a certain degree of supervision by the chemist of the station of their district.

But agricultural research has also been a characteristic feature of these institutions. It is stated that the investigation of soils has been the prominent object at 16 of them; experiments with manures at 24; vegetable physiology at 28; animal physiology and feeding experiments at 20; vine-culture and wine-making at 13; forest-culture at 9; and milk-production at 11. Others, according to their locality, have devoted special attention to fruit-culture, olive-culture, the cultivation of moor, bog, and peat land, the production of silk, the manufacture of spirit, and other products.

Nor does this enumeration of the institutions established as the direct result of Liebig's influence, and of the subjects investigated under their auspices, complete the list either of the workers engaged, or of the work accomplished in agricultural research. To say nothing of the labours of Boussingault, which commenced some years prior to the appearance of Liebig's first work, and which are fortunately still at the service of agriculture, important contributions have been made by the late Professors Johnston and Anderson in Scotland, and in this country both by Mr. Way and Dr. Voelcker, each alike in his private capacity, and in fulfilment of his duties as Chemist to the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Nor would it be fair to Mr. Lawes (who commenced experimenting first with plants in pots, and afterwards in the field, soon after entering into possession of his property in 1834, and with whom I have myself been associated since 1843) were I to omit in this place any mention of the investigations which have been so many years in progress at Rothamsted.

So much for the machinery; but what of the results achieved by all this activity in the application of chemistry to agriculture?

As I have already intimated, and as the foregoing brief statistical statement will have convinced you must be the case, it will be utterly impossible to give, on such an occasion as this, anything approaching to an adequate review of the progress achieved. Indeed, I have to confess that the more I have looked at the subject with the hope of treating it comprehensively, the more I have been impelled to substitute a very limited plan for the much more extended scheme which I had at first hoped to be able to fill up. I propose then to confine attention to a few special points, which have either some connection with one another, or to which recent results or discussions lend some special interest.

First as to the sources and the assimilation of the carbon, the hydrogen, and the oxygen of vegetation. From the point of view of the agricultural chemist, the hydrogen and the oxygen may be left out of view. For, if the cultivator provide to the plant the conditions for the accumulation of sufficient nitrogen and carbon, he may leave it to take care of itself in the matter of hydrogen and oxygen. That the hydrogen of the carbo-hydrates is exclusively obtained from water, is, to say the least, probable; and whether part of their oxygen is derived from carbonic acid, and part from water, or the whole from either of these, will not affect his agricultural practice.

With regard to the carbon, the whole tendency of subsequent observations is to confirm the opinion put forward by De Saussure about the commencement of the century, and so forcibly insisted upon by Liebig forty years later—that the greater part, if not the whole of it, is derived from the carbonic acid of the atmosphere. Indeed, direct experiments are not wanting—those of Moll, for example—from which it has been concluded that plants do not even utilise the carbonic acid which they may take up from the soil by their roots. However this may be, we may safely conclude that practically the whole of the carbon which it is the object of the cultivator to force the plants he grows to take up is derived from the atmosphere, in which it exists in such extremely small proportion, but nevertheless large actual, and constantly renewed amount.

Judging from the more recent researches on the point, it would seem probable that the estimate of one part of carbon, as carbonic acid, in 10,000 of air, is more probably too high than too low as an estimate of the average quantity in the ambient atmosphere of our globe. And, although this would correspond to several times more in the column of air resting over an acre of land than the vegetation of that area can annually take up, it represents an extremely small amount at any one time in contact with the growing plants, and it could only suffice on the supposition of a very rapid renewal, accomplished as the result, on the one hand of a constant return of carbonic acid to the atmosphere by combustion and the respiration of animals, and on the other of a constant interchange and equalisation among the constituents of the atmosphere.

It will convey a more definite idea of what is accomplished by vegetation in the assimilation of carbon from the atmosphere if I give, in round numbers, the results of some direct experiments made at Rothamsted, instead of making general statements merely.

In a field which has now grown wheat for thirty-seven years in succession, there are some plots to which not an ounce of carbon has been returned during the whole of that period. Yet, with purely mineral manure, an average of about 1000 pounds of carbon is annually removed from the land; and where a given amount of nitrogenous manure is employed with the mineral manure, an average of about 1500 pounds per acre per annum more is obtained; in all an average of about 2500 pounds of carbon annually assimilated over an acre of land without any return of carbonaceous manure to it.

In a field in which barley has been grown for twenty-nine years in succession, quite accordant results have been obtained. There, smaller amounts of nitrogenous manure have been employed with the mineral manure than in the experiments with wheat above cited; but the increase in the assimilation of carbon for a given amount of nitrogen supplied in the manure is greater in the case of the barley than of the wheat.

With sugar-beet, again, larger amounts of carbon have been annually accumulated without the supply of any to the soil, but under the influence of a liberal provision of both nitrogenous and mineral manure, than by either wheat or barley.

Lastly, with grass, still larger amounts of carbon have been annually accumulated, without any supply of it by manure.

Many experiments have been made, in Germany and elsewhere, to determine the amount of the different constituents taken up at different periods of the growth of various plants. But we may refer to some made at Rothamsted long ago to illustrate the rapidity with which the carbon of our crops may be withdrawn from the atmosphere.

In 1847, we carefully took samples from a growing wheat crop at different stages of its progress, commencing on June 21, and in these samples the dry matter, the mineral matter, the nitrogen, &c., were determined. On each occasion the produce of two separate eighths or sixteenths of an acre was cut and weighed, so that the data were provided to calculate the amounts of the several constituents which had been accumulated per acre at each period. The result was that, whilst during little more than five weeks from June 21, there was comparatively little increase in the amount of nitrogen accumulated over a given area, more than half the total carbon of the crop was accumulated during that period.

Numerous experiments of a somewhat similar kind, made in another season, 1856, concurred in showing that, whilst the carbon of the crop was more than doubled after the middle of June, its nitrogen increased in a much less degree over the same period.

Similar experiments were also made, in 1854 and in 1856, with beans. The general result was that a smaller proportion of both the total nitrogen and the total carbon was accumulated by the middle or end of June than in the case of the wheat; though the actual amount of nitrogen taken up by the beans was much greater, both before and after that date. The nitrogen of this leguminous crop increased in a much greater proportion during the subsequent stages of growth than did that of the gramineous crop; but the carbon increased in a larger proportion still, three-fourths or more of the total amount of it being accumulated after the middle of June.

I should say that determinations of carbon, made in samples of soil taken from the wheat field at different periods during recent years, indicate some decline in the percentage of carbon in the soils, but not such as to lead to the supposition that the soils have contributed to the carbon of the crops. Besides the amount of carbon annually removed, there will, of course, be a further accumulation in the stubble and roots of the crops; and the reduction in the total carbon of the soil, if such have really taken place, would show that the annual oxidation within it is greater than the annual gain by the residue of the crops.

Large as is the annual accumulation of carbon from the atmosphere over a given area in the cases cited, it is obvious that the quantity must vary exceedingly with variation of climatal conditions. It is, in fact, several times as great in the case of tropical vegetation—that of the sugar-cane for example. And not only is the greater part of the assimilation accomplished within a comparatively small portion of the year (varying of course according to the region), but the action is limited to the hours of daylight, whilst during darkness there is rather loss than gain.

But it is remarkable that whilst the accumulation of carbon, the chief gain of solid material, takes place under the influence of light, cell-division, cell-multiplication, increase in the structure of the plant, in other words, what, as distinguished from assimilation, vegetable physiologists designate as *growth*, takes place, at any rate chiefly, during the night; and is accompanied, not with the taking up of carbonic acid and the yielding up of oxygen, but with the taking up of oxygen and the giving up of carbonic acid. This evolution of carbonic acid during darkness must obviously be extremely small, compared with the converse action during day-light, coincidentally with which practically the whole of the accumulation of solid substance is accomplished. But, as the product of the night action is the same as in the respiration of animals, this is distinguished by vegetable physiologists as the respiration of plants.

I suppose I shall be considered a heretic if I venture to suggest that it seems in a sense inappropriate to apply the term *growth* to that which is associated with actual loss of material, and that the term *respiration* should be applied to so secondary an action as that as the result of which carbonic acid is given off from the plant. It may, I think, be a question whether there is any advantage in thus attempting to establish a parallelism between animal and vegetable processes; rather would it seem advantageous to keep prominently in view their contrasted, or at any rate complementary characteristics, especially in the matter of the taking up of carbonic acid and the giving up of oxygen on the one hand, and the taking in of oxygen and the giving up of carbonic acid on the other.

But it is obvious that in latitudes where there is comparatively continuous daylight during the periods of vegetation, the two actions—designated respectively assimilation and growth—must go on much more simultaneously than where there is a more marked alternation of daylight and darkness. In parts of Norway and Sweden, for example, where, during the summer, there is almost continuous daylight, crops of barley are grown with only from six to eight weeks intervening from seed-time to harvest. And Professor Schübeler, of Christiania, after making observations on the subject for nearly thirty years, has recently described the characteristics of the vegetation developed under the influence of short summers with almost continuous light. He states that, after acclimatisation, many garden flowers increase in size and depth of colour; that there is a prevailing tinge of red in the plants of the fjelds; that the aroma of fruits is increased, and their colour well developed, but that they are deficient in sweetness; and that the development of essential oils in certain plants is greater than in the same plants grown in other latitudes. Indeed, he considers it to be an established fact that light bears the same relation to aroma as heat does to sweetness.

In connection with this question of the characters of growth under the influence of continuous light, compared with those developed with alternate light and darkness, the recent experiments of Dr. Siemens on the influence of electric light on vegetation are of considerable interest.

In one series of experiments, he kept one set of plants entirely in the dark, a second he exposed to electric light only, a third to daylight only, and a fourth to daylight, and afterwards to electric light from 5 to 11 P.M. Those kept in the dark acquired a pale yellow colour, and died; those exposed to electric light only, maintained a light green colour, and survived; those exposed to daylight were of a darker green colour, and were more vigorous; and, lastly, those submitted to alternate daylight and electric light, and but a few hours of darkness, showed decidedly greater vigour, and, as he says, the green of the leaf was of a dark rich hue. He concluded that daylight was twice as effective as electric light; but that, nevertheless, 'electric light was clearly sufficiently powerful to form chlorophyll and its derivatives in the plants.'

In a second series of experiments one group of plants was exposed to daylight alone; a second to electric light during eleven hours of the night, and was kept in the dark during the day; and a third to eleven hours day, and eleven hours electric light. The plants in daylight showed the usual healthy appearance; those in alternate electric light and darkness were for the most part of a lighter colour; and those in alternate daylight and electric light far surpassed the others in darkness of green and vigorous appearance generally.

I have carefully considered these general descriptions with a view to their bearing on the question whether the characters developed under the influence of electric light, and especially those under the influence of almost continuous light, are more prominently those of assimilation or of growth; but I have not been able to come to a decisive opinion on the point. From some conversation I had with Dr. Siemens on the subject, I gather that the characteristics were more those of dark colour and vigour than of tendency to great extension in size. The dark green colour we may suppose to indicate a liberal production of chlorophyll; but if the depth of colour was more than normal, it might be concluded that the chlorophyll had not performed its due amount of assimilation work. In regard to this point, attention may be called to the fact that Dr. Siemens refers to the abundance of the blue or actinic rays in the electric arc, conditions which would not be supposed specially to favour assimilation. On the other hand, the vigour, rather than characteristic extension in size, would seem to indicate a limitation of what is technically called growth, under the influence of the almost continuous light.

Among the numerous field experiments made at Rothamsted, we have many examples of great variation in depth of green colour of the vegetation growing on plots side by side under known differences as to manuring; and we have abundant evidence of difference of composition, and of rate of carbon-assimilation, coincidently with these different shades of colour. One or two instances will strikingly illustrate the point under consideration.

There are two plots side by side in the series of experiments on permanent grass land, each of which received during six consecutive years precisely the same amount of a mixed mineral manure, including potass, and the same amount of nitrogen in the form of ammonia salts. After those six years, one of the two plots was still manured in exactly the same way each year; whilst the other was so, with one exception—namely, the potass was now excluded from the manure. Calculation shows that there was a great excess of potass applied during the first six years; and there was no marked diminution of produce during the five or six years succeeding the cessation of the application. But each year subsequently, up to the present time, now a period of fourteen years, or of nineteen since the exclusion of the potass, the falling off in produce has been very great.

The point of special interest is, however, that all but identically the same amount of nitrogen has been taken up by the herbage growing with the deficiency of potass as by that with the continued supply of it. The colour of the vegetation with the deficiency of potass has been very much darker green than that with the full supply of it. Nevertheless, taking the average of the eight years succeeding the first six of the exclusion of the potass, there has been nearly 400 lbs. less carbon assimilated per acre per annum; and in some of the still later years the deficiency has been very much greater than this.

We have here, then, the significant fact that an equal amount of nitrogen was taken up in both cases, that chlorophyll was abundantly produced, but that the full amount of carbon was not assimilated. In other words, the nitrogen was there, the chlorophyll was there, there was the same sun-light for both plots; but the assimilation-work was not done where there was not a due supply of potass.

Again, in the field in which barley has now been grown for twenty-nine years in succession, there are two plots which have annually received the same amount of nitrogen—the one in conjunction with salts of potass, soda, and magnesia; and the other with the same, and superphosphate of lime in addition. The plot without the superphosphate of lime always maintains a darker green colour. At any given period of growth the dry substance of the produce would undoubtedly contain a higher percentage of nitrogen; but there has been a deficient assimilation of carbon, amounting to more than 500 lbs. per acre per annum, over a period of twenty-eight years. Here again, then, the nitrogen was there, the chlorophyll was there, the sun-light was there, but the work was not done.

It may be stated generally that, in comparable cases, depth of green colour, if not beyond a certain limit, may be taken to indicate corresponding activity of carbon assimilation; but the two instances cited are sufficient to show that we may, so far as the nitrogen, the chlorophyll, and the light are concerned, have the necessary conditions for full assimilation, but not corresponding actual assimilation.

It cannot, I think, fail to be recognised that in these considerations we have opened up to view a very wide field of research, and some of the points involved we may hope will receive elucidation from the further prosecution of Dr. Siemens's experiments. He will himself, I am sure, be the first to admit that what he has already accomplished has done more in raising than in settling important questions. I understand that he proposes to submit plants to the action of the separated rays of his artificial light, and the results obtained cannot fail to be of much interest. But it is obvious that the investigation should now pass from its present initiative character to that of a strictly quantitative inquiry. We ought to know not only that, under given conditions as to light, plants acquire a deeper green colour and attain maturity much earlier than under others, but how much matter is assimilated in each case, and something also of the comparative chemical characters of the products. As between the action of one description of light and another, and as between the greater or less continuity of exposure, we ought to be able to form a judgment whether the proper balance between assimilation on the one hand, and growth and proper maturation on the other, has been attained; whether the plants have taken up nitrogen and mineral matter, and produced chlorophyll, in a greater degree than the quantity and the quality of the light have been able to turn to account; or whether the conditions as to light have been such that the processes of transformation and growth from the reserve material provided by assimilation have not been normal, or have not kept pace with the production of that material.

But one word more in reference to Dr. Siemens's results and proposed extension of his inquiries. Even supposing that by submitting growing crops to continuous light by the aid of the electric light during the night, they could be brought to maturity within a period shorter than at present approximately in proportion to the increased number of hours of exposure, the estimates of the cost of illuminating the vegetation of an acre of land certainly do not seem to hold out any hope that agriculture is likely to derive benefit from such an application of science to its needs. If, however, the characters of growth and of maturation should prove to be suitable for the requirements of horticultural products of luxury and high value, it may possibly be otherwise with such productions.

The above considerations obviously suggest the question: What is the office of chlorophyll in the processes of vegetation? Is it, as has generally been assumed, confined to effecting, in some way not yet clearly understood, carbon assimilation, and, this done, its function ended? Or is it, as Pringsheim has recently suggested, chiefly of avail in protecting the subjacent cells and their contents from those rays of light which would be adverse to the secondary processes which have been distinguished as growth?

Appropriate as it would seem that I should attempt to lay before you a *résumé* of results bearing upon the points herein involved, so numerous and so varied have been the investigations which have been undertaken on the several branches of the question in recent years, that adequately to discuss them would occupy the whole time and space at my disposal. I must therefore be content thus to direct attention to the subject and pass on to other points.

It has been shown that the plant may receive abundance of nitrogen, may produce abundance of chlorophyll, and may be subject to the influence of sufficient light, and yet not assimilate a due amount of carbon. On the other hand, it has been seen that the mineral constituents may be liberally provided, and yet, in the absence of a sufficient supply of nitrogen in an available condition, the deficiency in the assimilation of carbon will be still greater. In fact, assuming all the other necessary conditions to be provided, it was seen that the amount of carbon assimilated depended on the available supply of nitrogen.

In a certain general sense it may be said that the success of the cultivator may be measured by the amount of carbon he succeeds in accumulating in his crops. And as, other conditions being provided, the amount of carbon assimilated depends on the supply of nitrogen in an available form within the reach of the plants, it is obvious that the question of the sources of the nitrogen of vegetation is one of first importance. Are they the same for all descriptions of plants? Are they to be sought entirely in the soil, or entirely in the atmosphere, or partly in the one and partly in the other?

These are questions which Mr. Lawes and myself have discussed so frequently that it might seem some apology was due for recurring to the subject here, especially as I referred to it in some of its aspects before this Section at the Sheffield Meeting last year. But the subject still remains one of first importance to agriculture, and it could not be omitted from consideration in such a review as I have undertaken to give. Moreover, there are some points connected with it still unsettled, and some still disputed.

It will be remembered that De Saussure's conclusion was that plants did not assimilate the free or uncombined nitrogen of the atmosphere, and that they derived their nitrogen from the compounds of it existing in the atmosphere, and especially in the soil. Liebig, too, concluded that plants do not assimilate nitrogen from the store of it existing in the free or uncombined state, but that ammonia was their main source, and he assumed the amount of it annually coming down in rain to be much more than we now know to be the case.

Referring to our previous papers for full details respecting most of the points in question, I will state, as briefly as I can, the main facts known—first in regard to the amount of the measurable, or as yet measured, annual deposition of combined nitrogen from the atmosphere; and secondly as to the amount of nitrogen annually assimilated over a given area by different crops—so that some judgment may be formed as to whether the measured atmospheric sources are sufficient for the requirements of agricultural production, or whether, or where, we must look for other supplies?

First, as to the amount of combined nitrogen coming down as ammonia and nitric acid in the measured aqueous deposits from the atmosphere.

Judging from the results of determinations made many years ago, partly by Mr. Way, and partly by ourselves, in the rain, &c., collected at Rothamsted; from the results of numerous determinations made much more recently by Professor Frankland in the deposits collected at Rothamsted, and also in rain collected elsewhere; from the results obtained by Boussingault in Alsace; from those of Marié-Davy at the Meteorological Observatory at Montsouris, Paris; and from those of many others made in France and Germany—we concluded, some years ago, that the amount of combined nitrogen annually so coming down from the atmosphere would not exceed 8 or 10 lbs. per acre per annum in the open country in Western Europe. Subsequent records would lead to the conclusion that this estimate is more probably too high than too low. And here it may be mentioned in passing, that numerous determinations of the nitric acid in the drainage water collected from land at Rothamsted, which had been many years unmanured, indicate that there may be a considerable annual loss by the soil in that way; indeed, probably sometimes much more than the amount estimated to be annually available from the measured aqueous deposits from the atmosphere.

It should be observed, however, that the amount of combined nitrogen, especially of ammonia, is very much greater in a given volume of the minor aqueous deposits than it is in rain; and there can be no doubt that there would be more deposited within the pores of a given area of soil than on an equal area of the non-porous even surface of a rain-gauge. How much, however, might thus be available beyond that determined in the collected and measured aqueous deposits, the existing evidence does not afford the means of estimating with any certainty.

The next point to consider is—What is the amount of nitrogen annually obtained over a given area, in different crops, when they are grown without any supply of it in manure? The field experiments at Rothamsted supply important data relating to this subject.

Thus, over a period of 32 years (up to 1875 inclusive), wheat yielded an average of 20·7 lbs. of nitrogen per acre per annum, without any manure; but the annual yield has declined from an average of more than 25 lbs. over the first 8, to less than 16 lbs. over the last 12, of those 32 years; and the yield (it is true with several bad seasons), has been still less since.

Over a period of 24 years, barley yielded 18·3 lbs. of nitrogen per acre per annum, without any manure; with a decline from 22 lbs. over the first 12, to only 14·6 lbs. over the next 12 years.

With neither wheat nor barley did a complex mineral manure at all materially increase the yield of nitrogen in the crops.

A succession of so-called 'root crops'—common turnips, Swedish turnips, and sugar beet (with 3 years of barley intervening after the first 8 years)—yielded, with a complex mineral manure, an average of 26·8 lbs. of nitrogen per acre per annum over a period of 31 years. The yield declined from an average of 42 lbs. over the first 8 years, to only 13·1 lbs. (in sugar beet) over the last 5 of the 31 years; but it has risen somewhat during the subsequent 4 years, with a change of crop to mangolds.

With the leguminous crop, beans, there was obtained, over a period of 24 years, 31·3 lbs. of nitrogen per acre per annum without any manure, and 45·5 lbs. with a complex mineral manure, including potass (but without nitrogen). Without manure the yield declined from 48·1 lbs. over the first 12 years to only 14·6 lbs. over the last 12; and with the complex mineral manure it declined from 61·5 lbs. over the first 12, to 29·5 lbs. over the last 12, years of the 24.

Again, an ordinary rotation of crops—of turnips, barley, clover or beans, and wheat—gave over a period of 28 years an average of 36·8 lbs. of nitrogen per acre per annum without any manure, and of 45·2 lbs. with superphosphate of lime alone, applied once every four years, that is for the root crop. Both without manure, and with superphosphate of lime alone, there was a considerable decline in the later courses.

A very remarkable instance of nitrogen yield is the following—in which the results obtained when barley succeeds barley, that is when one gramineous crop succeeds another, are contrasted with those when a leguminous crop, clover, intervenes between the two cereal crops. Thus, after the growth of six grain crops in succession by artificial manures alone, the field so treated was divided, and, in 1873, on one half barley, and on the other half clover, was grown. The barley yielded 37·3 lbs. of nitrogen per acre, but the three cuttings of clover yielded 151·3 lbs. In the next year, 1874, barley succeeded on both the barley and the clover portions of the field. Where barley had previously been grown, and had yielded 37·3 lbs. of nitrogen per acre, it now yielded 39·1 lbs.; but where the clover had previously been grown, and had yielded 151·3 lbs. of nitrogen, the barley succeeding it gave 69·4 lbs., or 30·3 lbs. more after the removal of 151·3 lbs. in clover, than after the removal of only 37·3 lbs. in barley.

Nor was this curious result in any way accidental. It is quite consistent with agricultural experience that the growth and removal of a highly nitrogenous leguminous crop should leave the land in high condition for the growth of a gramineous corn crop, which characteristically requires nitrogenous manuring; and the determinations of nitrogen in numerous samples of the soil taken from the two separate portions of the field, after the removal of the barley, and the clover, respectively, concurred in showing considerably more nitrogen, especially in the first 9 inches of depth, in the samples from the portion where the clover had been grown, than in those from the portion whence the barley had been taken. Here, then, the surface soil at any rate, had been considerably enriched in nitrogen by the growth and removal of a very highly nitrogenous crop.

Lastly, clover has now been grown for twenty-seven years in succession, on a small plot of garden ground which had been under ordinary garden cultivation for probably two or three centuries. In the fourth year after the commencement of the experiment, the soil was found to contain, in its upper layers, about four times as much nitrogen as the farm-arable-land surrounding it; and it would doubtless be correspondingly rich in other constituents. It is estimated that an amount of nitrogen has been removed in the clover crops grown, corresponding to an average of not far short of two hundred pounds per acre per annum; or about ten times as much as in the cereal crops, and several times as much as in any of the other crops, growing on ordinary arable land; and, although the yield continues to be very large, there has been a marked decline over the second half of the period compared with the first. Of course, calculations of the produce of a few square yards into quantities per acre can only be approximately correct. But there can at any rate be no doubt whatever, that the amount of nitrogen annually removed has been very great; and very far beyond what it would be possible to attain on ordinary arable land; where, indeed, we have not succeeded in getting even a moderate growth of clover for more than a very few years in succession.

One other illustration should be given of the amounts of nitrogen removed from a given area of land by different descriptions of crop, namely, of the results obtained when plants of the gramineous, the leguminous, and other families, are growing together, as in the mixed herbage of grass-land.

It is necessary here to remind you that gramineous crops grown separately on arable land, such as wheat, barley, or oats, contain a comparatively small percentage of nitrogen, and assimilate a comparatively small amount of it over a given area. Yet, nitrogenous manures have generally a very striking effect in increasing the growth of such crops. The highly nitrogenous leguminous crops (such as beans and clover), on the other hand, yield, as has been seen, very much more nitrogen over a given area, and yet they are by no means characteristically benefited by direct nitrogenous manuring; whilst, as has been shown, their growth is considerably increased, and they yield considerably more nitrogen over a given area, under the influence of purely mineral manures, and especially of potass manures. Bearing these facts in mind, the following results, obtained on the mixed herbage of grass land, will be seen to be quite consistent.

A plot of such mixed herbage, left entirely unmanured, gave over twenty years, an average of 33 pounds of nitrogen per acre per annum. Over the same period another plot, which received annually a complex mineral manure, including potass, during the first six years, but excluding it during the last fourteen years, yielded 46·3 lbs of nitrogen; whilst another, which received the mixed mineral manure, including potass, every year of the twenty, yielded 55·6 lbs. of nitrogen per acre per annum. Without manure, there was some decline of yield in the later years; with the partial mineral manuring there was a greater decline; but with the complete mineral manuring throughout the whole period, there was even some increase in the yield of nitrogen in the later years.

Now, the herbage growing without manure comprised about fifty species, representing about twenty natural families; that growing with the limited supply of potass comprised fewer species, but a larger amount of the produce, especially in the earlier years, consisted of leguminous species, and the yield of nitrogen was greater. Lastly, the plot receiving potass every year yielded still more leguminous herbage, and, accordingly, still more nitrogen.

The most striking points brought out by the foregoing illustrations are the following:—

First. Without nitrogenous manure, the gramineous crops annually yielded, for many years in succession, much more nitrogen over a given area than is accounted for by the amount of combined nitrogen annually coming down in the measured aqueous deposits from the atmosphere.

Second. The root crops yielded more nitrogen than the cereal crops, and the leguminous crops very much more still.

Third. In all cases—whether of cereal crops, root crops, leguminous crops, or a rotation of crops—*the decline in the annual yield of nitrogen, when none was supplied, was very great.*

How are these results to be explained? Whence comes the nitrogen? and especially whence comes the much larger amount taken up by plants of the leguminous and some other families, than by the gramineæ? And, lastly, what is the significance of the great decline in the yield of nitrogen in all the crops when none is supplied in the manure?

Many explanations have been offered. It has been assumed that the combined nitrogen annually coming down from the atmosphere is very much larger than we have estimated it, and that it is sufficient for all the requirements of annual growth. It has been supposed that 'broad-leaved plants' have the power of taking up nitrogen in some form from the atmosphere, in a degree, or in a manner, not possessed by the narrow-leaved gramineæ. It has been argued that, in the last stages of the decomposition of organic matter in the soil, hydrogen is evolved, and that this nascent hydrogen combines with the free nitrogen of the atmosphere, and so forms ammonia. It has been suggested that ozone may be evolved in the oxidation of organic matter in the soil, and that, uniting with free nitrogen, nitric acid would be produced. Lastly, it has by some been concluded that plants assimilate the free nitrogen of the atmosphere, and that some descriptions are able to do this in a greater degree than others.

We have discussed these various points on more than one occasion; and we have given our reasons for concluding that none of the explanations enumerated can be taken as accounting for the facts of growth.

Confining attention here to the question of the assimilation of free nitrogen by plants, it is obvious that, if this were established, most of our difficulties would vanish. This question has been the subject of a great deal of experimental inquiry, from the time that Boussingault entered upon it, about the year 1837, nearly up to the present time. About twenty years ago it was elaborately investigated at Rothamsted. In publishing the results of that inquiry, those of others relating to it were fully discussed; and although the recorded evidence is admittedly very conflicting, we then came to the conclusion, and still adhere to it, that the balance of the direct experimental evidence on the point is decidedly against the supposition of the assimilation of free nitrogen by plants. Indeed, the strongest argument we know of in its favour, is, that some such explanation is wanted.

Not only is the balance of direct experimental evidence against the assumption that plants assimilate free or uncombined nitrogen, but it seems to us that the balance of existing indirect evidence is also in favour of another explanation of our difficulties.

I have asked what is the significance of the gradual decline of produce of all the different crops when continuously grown without nitrogenous manure? It cannot be that, in growing the same crop year after year on the same land, there is any residue left in the soil that is injurious to the subsequent growth of the same description of crop; for (excepting the beans) more of each description of crop has been grown year after year on the same land than the average yield of the country at large under ordinary rotation, and ordinary treatment—provided only, that suitable soil-conditions were supplied. Nor can the diminishing produce, and the diminishing yield of nitrogen, be accounted for on the supposition that there was a deficient supply of available mineral constituents in the soil. For, it has been shown that the cereals yielded little more, and declined nearly as much as without manure, when a complex mineral manure was used, such as was proved to be adequate when available nitrogen was also supplied. So far as the root crops are concerned, the yield of nitrogen, though it declined very much, was greater at first, and on the average, than in the case of the cereals. As to the leguminosæ, which require so much nitrogen from somewhere, it is to be observed that on ordinary arable land the yield has not been maintained under any conditions of manuring; and the decline was nearly as marked with mineral manures as without any manure. Compared with the growth of the leguminosæ on arable land, the remarkable result with the garden clover would seem clearly to indicate that the question was one of soil, and not of atmospheric supply. And the fact that all the other crops will yield full agricultural results even on ordinary arable land, when proper manures are applied, is surely very strong evidence that it is with them, too, a question of soil, and not of atmospheric supply.

But we have other evidence leading to the same conclusion. Unfortunately we have not reliable samples of the soil of the different experimental fields taken at the commencement of each series of experiments, and subsequently at stated intervals. We have, nevertheless, in some cases, evidence sufficient to show whether or not the nitrogen of the soil has suffered diminution by the continuous growth of the crop without nitrogenous manure.

Thus, we have determined the nitrogen in the soil of the continuously unmanured wheat plot at several successive periods, and the results prove that a gradual reduction in the nitrogen of the soil is going on; and, so far as we are able to form a judgment on the point, the diminution is approximately equal to the nitrogen taken out in crops; and the amount estimated to be received in the annual rainfall is approximately balanced by the amount lost by the land as nitrates in the drainage water.

In the case of the continuous root-crop soil, on which the decline in the yield of nitrogen in the crop was so marked, the percentage of nitrogen, after the experiment had been continued for twenty-seven years, was found to be lower where no nitrogen had been applied than in any other arable land on the farm which has been examined.

In the case of the experiments on the mixed herbage of grass land, the soil of the plot which, under the influence of a mixed mineral manure, including potass, had yielded such a large amount of leguminous herbage and such a large amount of nitrogen, showed, after twenty years, a considerably lower percentage of nitrogen than that of any other plot in the series.

Lastly, determinations of nitrogen in the garden soil which has yielded so much nitrogen in clover, made in samples collected in the fourth and the twenty-sixth years of the twenty-seven of the experiments, show a very large diminution in the percentage of nitrogen. The diminution, to the depth of 9 inches only, represents approximately three-fourths as much as the amount estimated to be taken out in the clover during the intervening period; and the indication is, that there has been a considerable reduction in the lower depths also. It is to be supposed, however, that there would be loss in other ways than by the crop alone.

I would ask, Have we not in these facts—that full amounts of the different crops can be grown, provided proper soil-conditions are supplied; that without nitrogenous manure the yield of nitrogen in the crop rapidly declines; and that, coincidently with this, there is a decline in the percentage of nitrogen in the soil—have we not in these facts cumulative evidence pointing to the soil, rather than to the atmosphere, as the source of the nitrogen of our crops?

In reference to this point, I may mention that the ordinary arable soil at Rothamsted may be estimated to contain about 3000 lbs. of nitrogen per acre in the first 9 inches of depth, about 1700 lbs. in the second 9 inches and about 1500 lbs. in the third 9 inches—or a total of about 6200 lbs. per acre to the depth of 27 inches.

In this connection, it is of interest to state that a sample of Oxford clay, obtained in the sub-Wealden exploration boring, at a depth of between 500 and 600 feet (and which was kindly given to me by the President of the Association, Professor Ramsay, some years ago), showed, on analysis at Rothamsted, approximately the same percentage of nitrogen as the subsoil at Rothamsted taken to the depth of about 4 feet only.

Lastly, in a letter received from Boussingault some years ago, referring to the sources whence the nitrogen of vegetation is derived, he says:—

'From the atmosphere, because it furnishes ammonia in the form of carbonate, nitrates, or nitrites, and various kinds of dust. Theodore de Saussure was the first to demonstrate the presence of ammonia in the air, and consequently in meteoric waters. Liebig exaggerated the influence of this ammonia on vegetation, since he went so far as to deny the utility of the nitrogen which forms a part of farm-yard manure. This influence is nevertheless real, and comprised within limits which have quite recently been indicated in the remarkable investigations of M. Schlösing.

'From the soil, which, besides furnishing the crops with mineral alkaline substances, provides them with nitrogen, by ammonia, and by nitrates, which are formed in the soil at the expense of the nitrogenous matters contained in diluvium, which is the basis of vegetable earth; compounds in which nitrogen exists in stable combination, only becoming fertilising by the effect of time. If we take into account their immensity, the deposits of the last geological periods must be considered as an inexhaustible reserve of fertilising agents. Forests, prairies, and some vineyards have really no other manures than what are furnished by the atmosphere and by the soil. Since the basis of all cultivated land contains materials capable of giving rise to nitrogenous combinations, and to mineral substances, assimilable by plants, it is not necessary to suppose that in a system of cultivation the excess of nitrogen found in the crops is derived from the free nitrogen of the atmosphere. As for the absorption of the gaseous nitrogen of the air by vegetable earth, I am not acquainted with a single irreproachable observation that establishes it; not only does the earth not absorb gaseous nitrogen, but it gives it off, as you have observed in conjunction with Mr. Lawes, as Reiset has shown in the case of dung, as M. Schlösing and I have proved in our researches on nitrification.

'If there is one fact perfectly demonstrated in physiology, it is this of the non-assimilation of free nitrogen by plants; and I may add by plants of an inferior order, such as mycoderms and mushrooms (Translation).'

If, then, our soils are subject to a continual loss of nitrogen by drainage, probably in many cases more than they receive of combined nitrogen from the atmosphere—if the nitrogen of our crops is derived mainly from the soil, and not from the atmosphere—and if, when due return is not made from without, we are drawing upon what may be termed the store of nitrogen of the soil itself—is there not, in the case of many soils at any rate, as much danger of the exhaustion of their available nitrogen as there has been supposed to be of the exhaustion of their available mineral constituents?

I had hoped to say something more about soils, to advance our knowledge respecting which an immense amount of investigation has been devoted of late years, but in regard to which we have yet very much more to learn. I must, however, now turn to other matters.

I have thus far directed attention to some points of importance in connection with the sources of the constituents of our crops, and I must now briefly refer to some in connection with the composition, and to some relating to the uses, of the crops themselves.

As to composition, I must confine myself to indicating something of what is known of the condition of the nitrogen in our various crops; though I had intended to say something respecting the carbo-hydrates, and especially respecting the various members of the cellulose group.

As to the nitrogen—in our first experiments on the feeding of animals, made in 1847, 1848, and 1849, the results of which were published in the last-mentioned year—we found that, in the case of succulent roots used as food, not only were they not of value as food in proportion to their richness in nitrogen, but when the percentage of it was higher than a certain normal amount, indicating relative succulence and immaturity, they were positively injurious to the animals. So marked was the variation of result according to the condition of maturity or otherwise of the foods employed, that, when reviewing the results of the experiments which had up to that time been conducted, in a paper read before this Section of the British Association at the Belfast Meeting in 1852 (and which was published in full in the annual volume[1]), we stated that the mode of estimating the amount of proteine compounds by multiplying the percentage of nitrogen by 6·3 was far from accurate, especially when applied to succulent vegetable foods, and that the individual compounds ought to be determined. The Rothamsted Laboratory staff was, however, much smaller then than it is now, and with the pressure of many other subjects upon us, it was at that time quite impossible to follow up the enquiry in that direction.

It is, indeed, only within the last ten years or so, that the question has been taken up at all systematically; but we are already indebted to E. Schulze, A. Urick, Church, Sachsse, Maercker, Kellner, Vines, Emmerling, and others, for important results relating to it.

Our knowledge in regard to the subject is, however, still very imperfect. But it is in progress of investigation from two distinctly different points of view—from that of the vegetable physiologist, and that of the agricultural chemist. The vegetable physiologist seeks to trace the changes that occur in the germination of the seed, and during the subsequent life-history of the plant, to the production of seed again. The agricultural chemist takes the various vegetable products in the condition in which they are used on the farm, or sold from it. And as a very large proportion of what is grown, such as grass, hay, roots, tubers, and various green crops, are not matured productions, it comes to be a matter of great importance to consider whether or not any large proportion of the nitrogenous contents of such products is in such condition as not to be of avail to the animals which consume them in their food?

We cannot say that the whole of the nitrogen in the seeds with which we have to deal exists as albuminoids. But we may safely assume that the nearer they approach to perfect ripeness, the less of non-albuminoid nitrogenous matters will they contain; and, in the case of the cereal grains at any rate, it is probable that if really perfectly ripe they will contain very nearly the whole of their nitrogen as albuminoids. With regard to some leguminous and other seeds, which contain peculiar nitrogenous bodies, the range may, however, be wider.

But whatever the condition of the nitrogenous bodies in the seeds we grow or sow, with germination begins a material change. Albuminoids are transformed into peptones, or peptone-like bodies, or degraded into various amido- or other compounds. Such change into more soluble and more diffusible bodies is, it is to be supposed, essential to their free migration, and to their subserviency to the purposes of growth. In the case of the germination, especially of some leguminous seeds, asparagine has been found to be a very prominent product of such degradation of the albuminoids; but it would seem that this disappears as the green parts are developed. But now the plant begins to receive supplies of nitrogen from the soil, as nitrates or ammonia, and it would seem that amides constitute a considerable proportion of the produced nitrogenous bodies, apparently as an intermediate stage in the formation of albuminoids. At any rate, such bodies are found to exist largely in the immature plant; whilst the amount of them diminishes as the plant, or its various parts, approach to maturity.

But not only have we thus, in unripened vegetable productions, a greater or less, and sometimes a very large, proportion of the nitrogenous bodies formed within the plant, existing as amido-compounds, but we may have a large amount existing in the juices as nitric acid, and some as ammonia, &c. Thus, E. Schulze determined the nitric acid in various 'roots;' and he found that, in some mangolds, more than one-third of the total nitrogen existed in that form, and about one-tenth as much as ammonia. In a considerable series at Rothamsted, we have found an extremely variable proportion existing as nitric acid, according to the size, succulence, or degree of maturity, of the roots; the amount being, as a rule, the least with the ripest and less highly nitrogenous roots, and the most with the most succulent, unripe, and highly nitrogenous ones. In some cases it reached as much as from

[1] 'On the Composition of Foods in relation to Respiration and the Feeding of Animals.'

20 to nearly 30 per cent. of the total nitrogen. In many other immature vegetable products nitric acid and ammonia have been found; but, so far as I remember, in none in anything like so large a proportion as in the so-called 'root-crops,' especially manoglds. In many, however, the quantity appears to be immaterial; and it is remarkable that whilst there is so much in the 'roots,' little or none is found in potatos.

No wonder that, in the experiments already referred to, we found the feeding result to be the worse the more succulent and immature the roots, and the higher their percentage of nitrogen, accordingly.

But it is to the difference in amount of the albuminoid bodies themselves, in different descriptions of vegetable produce, that I wish specially to direct attention, making, however, some reference to what is known of the proportion of the nitrogen existing as amido-compounds.

In some mangolds E. Schulze found only from about 20 to 22 per cent. of their total nitrogen to exist as insoluble and soluble albumin. But he found in one case 32·5, and in the other 40·8, per cent. of the total nitrogen as amides. In a large series of determinations at Rothamsted, by Church's method, we found a variation of from under 20 to over 40 per cent. of the total nitrogen of mangolds to exist as albuminoids; or, in other words, from nearly 60 to over 80 per cent. of it in the non-albuminoid condition.

In potatos Schulze found from under 50 to 65 per cent. of the total nitrogen as soluble and insoluble albumin, and from 27·7 to 49·1 per cent. as neutral and acid amides. In a series of potatos grown at Rothamsted, under very various conditions as to manuring, and in two different seasons, we found the nitrogen as albuminoids to range from little over 50 to more than 71 per cent. of the total nitrogen; leaving, of course, from less than 30 to nearly 50 per cent. to be accounted for in other ways.

Kellner determined the amount of nitrogen as albuminoids, and as amido-compounds, in a considerable series of green foods, both leguminous and gramineous, cut at different stages of their growth. The proportion of the total nitrogen not as albuminoids was, upon the whole, greater in the leguminosæ than in the gramineæ. In both, however, the proportion as albuminoids increased as the plants approached to maturity. The proportion as albuminoids was in all these products very much larger than in roots, and generally larger than in potatos. In the case of first-crop meadow hay, we found in the separated gramineous herbage 76·4, in the leguminous herbage 82, and in the miscellaneous herbage 80·3 per cent of the nitrogen as albuminoids; and in the second crop 86·2 per cent. in the gramineous, 88·3 per cent. in the leguminous, and 88·1 per cent. in the miscellaneous herbage. How far the higher proportion of the nitrogen as albuminoids in the second crops is to be taken as any indication of the characteristics of the autumn growth, or how far it is to be attributed to the accidental condition of the weather, may be a question.

These illustrations are sufficient to give some idea of the range and proportion of the nitrogen in different feeding crops which does not exist as albuminoids; and they are sufficient to show that a very large proportion of the non-albuminoid matter exists as various amido-compounds. The question arises, therefore, whether these bodies contribute in any way to the nutrition of the animals which feed upon them? We have but little experimental evidence on this point. As green herbage is the natural food of many descriptions of animal, we might suppose that characteristic constituents of it would not be without some value as food; but the cultivated root crops are much more artificial productions, and it is in them that we find such a very large proportion of non-albuminoid nitrogen. With respect to some of the amido-compounds, at any rate, direct experiments seem to show that they are digested in the animal body, and increase the elimination of urea. Weiske and Schrodt found that rabbits receiving, as their only nitrogenous food, either asparagine or gelatin, wasted and died; but a rabbit receiving both asparagine and gelatin increased in weight and survived to the end of the experiment, which lasted seventy-two days. From the results of other experiments made with sheep, they concluded that both asparagine and gelatin protect the albuminoids of the body from oxidation.

These considerations lead me, in conclusion, to refer briefly—and I promise it shall be as briefly as is consistent with clearness—to the two very much disputed questions of *the origin of muscular power*, and *the sources of the fat of the animal body*. These subjects Mr. Lawes and myself have frequently discussed elsewhere; but as the controversy has assumed a new phase quite recently, it seems desirable and appropriate that I should recur to it on the present occasion.

With regard to the question of the sources in the food of the fat of the animal body, Liebig originally maintained that although fat might be formed from the nitrogenous compounds within the body, the main source of it in the herbivora was the carbo-hydrates. In his later writings, he sharply criticised the experiments and arguments of those who have maintained the formation of fat chiefly from the proteine compounds; but he at the same time seems to attach more importance to that source than he formerly did. He gives it as his opinion that the question cannot be settled by experiments with herbivora. He adds that what we know with certainty is that, with these animals, albuminates and carbo-hydrates work together to produce fat; but whether the non-nitrogenous product, fat, has its origin in the albumin or in the carbo-hydrate, h considers it not easy to determine.

At the time when we commenced our experiments on the feeding of animals in 1847, the question whether the fat of the animals fed for human food was mainly derived from albuminoids or from carbo-hydrates had been scarcely raised, or at least it was not prominent. The question then was rather—whether the herbivora received their fat ready formed in their food, or whether it was produced within the body—the latter view being that which Liebig had so forcibly urged, at the same time maintaining that at any rate its chief source was the carbo-hydrates. Accordingly, our experiments were not specially arranged to determine whether or not the whole of the fat produced could or could not be derived from the albuminoids.

For each description of animal, oxen, sheep, and pigs, such foods as had been established by common experience to be appropriate were selected. The general plan of the experiments was—to give to one set a fixed amount of a recognised good food, containing known quantities of nitrogen, fatty matter, &c.; to another set the same amount of another food, of different characters in these respects; to other sets also fixed amounts of other foods in the same way; and then there was given, to the whole series, the same complementary food *ad libitum*. Or, to one set was supplied a uniform food rich in nitrogen, and to others uniform foods poorer in nitrogen, and so on, in each case *ad libitum*.

It will be seen that, in this way, a great variety of dietaries was arranged; and it will be observed that in each case the animals themselves fixed their consumption, according to the requirements of the system.

As already indicated, the individual nitrogenous and non-nitrogenous compounds of the foods were not determined. As a rule, the constituents determined were —the total dry matter, the ash, the fatty matter, and the nitrogen; from which last the amount of nitrogenous compounds it might represent was calculated by the usual factor. But, as already intimated, the results so obtained were only used with considerable reservation, especially in the case of all immature vegetable produce. Nor was the crude fibre determined; but, as in the case of the estimated nitrogenous substance, when interpreting the results, it was always considered whether or not the food contained much or little of probably indigestible woody matter.

The animals being periodically weighed, we were thus able to calculate the amounts of the so-estimated nitrogenous substance, and of the total non-nitrogenous substance, including and excluding fat, consumed—*for a given live-weight within a given time*, and *to produce a given amount of increase in live-weight*.

Experiments were made with a large number of sheep, and a large number of pigs. And, even without making allowance for the different condition of the nitrogenous or of the non-nitrogenous constituents, in comparable foods, the results obtained uniformly indicated that both the amount consumed by a given live-weight of animal within a given time, and that required to produce a given amount of increase, were determined much more by the amount of the non-nitrogenous than by that of the nitrogenous constituents which the food supplied. And when allowance was made for the different condition of the nitrogenous constituents, and for the greater or less amount of the non-nitrogenous ones which would probably be indigestible and effete, the indications were still more remarkable and conclusive.

In very many cases the animals were slaughtered, and carefully examined as to whether the tendency of development had been more that of growth in frame and flesh, or in fatness. Here, again, the evidence was clear—that the tendency to growth in frame and flesh was favoured by a high proportion of nitrogen in the food, and that to the production of fat by a high proportion of digestible non-nitrogenous constituents.

In a few cases the actual amount of fat in the animals in the lean, and in the fat condition, was determined; and the results admitted of no doubt whatever that a very large proportion of the stored-up fat could not have been derived from the fatty matter of the food, and must have been produced within the body.

So decisive and consistent were the very numerous and very varied results in regard to these points, that we had no hesitation in concluding—not only that much of the fat stored up was produced within the body, but that the source of much, at any rate, of the produced fat must have been the non-nitrogenous constituents of the food—in other words, the *carbo-hydrates.*

As already stated, however, as the question whether the source of the produced fat was the proteine compounds or the carbo-hydrates was not then prominent, we had not so arranged the experiments as to obtain the largest possible increase in fat with the smallest possible supply of nitrogenous compounds in the food; nor did we then even calculate whether or not there was sufficient nitrogenous matter consumed to be the source of the whole of the fat produced.

This question, indeed, excited very little interest, until, at a meeting of the Congress of Agricultural Chemists held at Munich in 1865 (at which I happened to be present), Professor Voit, from the results of experiments made in Pettenkofer's respiration apparatus with dogs fed on flesh, announced his conclusion that fat must have been produced from the nitrogenous substance, and that this was probably the chief, if not the only, source of the fat, even of herbivora—an opinion which he subsequently urged much more positively.

In the discussion which followed the reading of Professor Voit's paper, Baron Liebig forcibly called in question his conclusions; maintaining not only that it was inadmissible to form conclusions on such a point in regard to herbivora, from the results of experiments made with carnivora, but also that direct quantitative results obtained with herbivorous animals had afforded apparently conclusive evidence in favour of the opposite view.

Voit's paper excited considerable controversy, in which Mr. Lawes and myself joined. We maintained that experiments to determine such a question should be made, not with carnivora or omnivora fed on flesh, but with herbivora fed on their appropriate fattening food, and on such herbivora as common experience showed to be pre-eminently fat-producers. We pointed out[1] that the pig comprised, for a given live-weight, a comparatively small proportion of alimentary organs and contents; that, compared with that of the ruminants, his food was of a high character, yielding, for a given weight of it, much more total increase, much more fat, and much less necessarily effete matter; that, in proportion to his weight, he consumes a larger amount of food, and yields a larger amount, both of total increase and of fat, within a given time; and, lastly, that he contains a larger proportion of fat, both in a given live weight and in his increase whilst fattening.

It is obvious that, with these characteristics, there is much less probable range of error in calculating the amount and the composition of the increase in live-weight in relation to the amount and composition of the food consumed, than in the case of the ruminants; and that, therefore, the pig is very much more appropriate for the purpose of experiments to determine the sources in its food of the fat it produces.

Accordingly, we calculated a number of our early experiments made with pigs, to determine whether or not the nitrogenous substance they consumed was suffi-

[1] 'On the Sources of the Fat of the Animal Body,' *Phil. Mag.*, December 1866.

cient for the formation of the fat they produced. For simplicity of illustration, and to give every possible advantage to the view that nitrogenous substance might have been the source of the produced fat, we assumed the whole of the crude fat of the food to have been stored up in the animal—thus estimating a minimum amount to be produced. Then, again, we supposed the whole of the nitrogenous substance of the food to be perfectly digested, and to become available for the purposes of the system. Lastly, after deducting the amount of nitrogenous substance estimated to be stored up as such, the whole of the remainder was reckoned to be so broken up that no other carbon-compounds than fat and urea would be produced.

The result was, that, even adopting these inadmissible assumptions, in all the cases in which, according to common experience, the food was admittedly the most appropriate for the fattening of the animal, the calculation showed that a large amount of fat had been produced which could not have been derived from the nitrogenous substance of the food, and must therefore have had its source in the carbo-hydrates. Such a result is, moreover, entirely accordant with experience in practical feeding.

Reviewing the whole subject in great detail in 1869, Professor Voit refers to these results and calculations. He confesses that he has not been able to get a general view of the experiments from the mass of figures recorded, and from his comments he shows that he has on some points misunderstood them. He admits, however, that, as the figures stand, it would appear that fat had, in some instances, been derived from the carbo-hydrates. Still, he says, he cannot allow himself to consider that a transformation of carbo-hydrates into fat has thus been proved.

Professor Emil von Wolff, again, in his 'Landwirthschaftliche Fütterungslehre,' referring to the same experiments, admits that they are almost incomprehensible unless we assume the direct concurrence of the carbo-hydrates in the formation of fat. He, nevertheless, seems to consider that evidence of the kind in question is inconclusive; and he suggests that experiments with pigs should be made in a respiration apparatus to determine the point.

Mr. Lawes and myself entertained, however, the utmost confidence that the question was of easy settlement without any such apparatus, provided only suitable animals and suitable foods were selected. I, accordingly, gave a paper on the subject in the *Section für Landwirthschaft- und Agricultur-Chemie*, at the *Naturforscher Versammlung* held at Hamburg in 1876.[1] The points which I particularly insisted upon were—that the pig should be the subject of experiment; that he should be allowed to take as much as he would eat of his most appropriate fattening food, so that his increase, and the fat he produced, should bear as large a proportion as possible to his weight, to the total food, and to the total nitrogenous substance consumed. Finally, it was maintained that, if these conditions were observed, and the constituents of the food determined, and those of the increase of the animal estimated according to recognised methods, the results could not fail to be perfectly conclusive, without the intervention, either of a respiration apparatus, or of the analysis of the solid and liquid matters voided.

Results so obtained were adduced in proof of the correctness of the conclusions arrived at. We at the same time admitted that, although, for reasons indicated, we had always assumed that fat was formed from the carbo-hydrates in the case of ruminants as well as of pigs, yet, as in our experiments with those animals we had supplied too large amounts of ready formed fat, or of nitrogenous matter, or of both, it could not be shown so conclusively by the same mode of calculation in their case as in that of pigs.

In the discussion which followed, Professor Henneberg agreed that it seemed probable that fat could be formed from the carbo-hydrates in the case of pigs. In the case of experiments with other animals, however, the amount of fat produced was too nearly balanced by the amount of fat and albuminous matters available, to afford conclusive evidence on the point.

Quite recently, Professor Emil von Wolff ('Landwirthschaftliche Jahrbücher,'

[1] The substance of that communication is given in the *Journal of Anatomy an Physiology*, vol. xi. part iv.

Band viii. 1879, Supplement) has applied the same mode of calculation to results obtained by himself with pigs some years ago. He concluded that the whole of the body fat could not have been formed without the direct co-operation of the carbo-hydrates of the food. But what is of greater interest still is, that he also calculated, in the same way, the results of some then quite recent experiments of Henneberg, Kern, and Wattenberg, with sheep. He thus found that, even including the whole of the estimated amides with the albumin, there must have been a considerable production of fat from the carbo-hydrates; and, excluding the amides, the amount reckoned to be derived from the carbo-hydrates was of course much greater.

I will only add, on this point, that, on re-calculating some of our early results with sheep, which did not afford sufficiently conclusive evidence when the whole of the nitrogen of the food was reckoned as albumin, these show a very considerable formation of fat from the carbo-hydrates, if deduction be made for the probable amount of non-albuminoid nitrogenous matter of the food.

We have now, then, the two agricultural chemists of perhaps the highest authority, both as experimenters and writers on this subject on the Continent, giving in their adhesion to the view, that the fat of the herbivora, which we feed for human food, may be, and probably is, largely produced from the carbo-hydrates. I dare say, however, that some physiologists will not change their view until Voit gives them sanction by changing his, which, so far as I know, he has not yet done.

The question which has been currently entitled that of '*The Origin of Muscular Power*,' or '*The Sources of Muscular Power*,' has also been the subject of much investigation, and of much conflict of opinion, since the first publication of Liebig's views respecting it in 1842.

As I have already pointed out, he then maintained that the amount of muscular tissue transformed, the amount of nitrogenous substance oxidated, was the measure of the force generated in the body. He accordingly concluded that the requirement for the nitrogenous constituents of food would be increased in proportion to the increase of the force expended. In his more recent writings on the subject, he freely criticises those who take an opposite view. He nevertheless grants that the secretion of urea is not a measure of the force exerted; but, on the other hand, he does not commit himself to the admission that the oxidation of the carbo-hydrates is a source of muscular power.

The results of our own early and very numerous feeding experiments were, as has been said, extremely accordant in showing that, provided the nitrogenous constituents in the food were not below a certain rather limited amount, it was the quantity of the digestible and available non-nitrogenous constituents, and not that of the nitrogenous substance, that determined—both *the amount consumed by a given live-weight within a given time*, and *the amount of increase in live-weight produced.* They also showed that one animal, or one set of animals, might consume two or three times as much nitrogenous substance in proportion to a given live-weight within a given time as others in precisely comparable conditions as to rest or exercise. It was further proved that they did not store up nitrogenous subtance at all in proportion to the greater or less amount of it supplied in the food, but that the excess reappeared in the liquid and solid matters voided.

So striking were these results, that we were led to turn our attention to human dietaries, and also to a consideration of the management of the animal body undergoing somewhat excessive labour, as, for instance, the hunter, the racer, the cab-horse, and the foxhound, and also pugilists and runners. Stated in a very few words, the conclusion at which we arrived from these inquiries (which were summarised in our paper given at Belfast in 1852) was—that, unless the system were overtaxed, the demand induced by an increased exercise of force was more characterised by an increased requirement for the more specially respiratory, than for the nitrogenous, constituents of food.

Soon afterwards, in 1854, we found by direct experiments with two animals in exactly equal conditions as to exercise, both being in fact at rest, that the amount of urea passed by one feeding on highly nitrogenous food was more than twice as great as that fed on a food comparatively poor in nitrogen.

It was clear, therefore, that the rule which had been laid down by Liebig, and which has been assumed to be correct by so many writers, even up to the present time, did not hold good—namely, that 'The sum of the mechanical effects produced in two individuals, in the same temperature, is proportional to the amount of nitrogen in their urine; whether the mechanical force has been employed in voluntary or involuntary motions, whether it has been consumed by the limbs or by the heart and other viscera'—unless, indeed, as has been assumed by some experimenters, there is, with increased nitrogen in the food, an increased amount of mechanical force employed in the 'involuntary motions' sufficient to account for the increased amount of urea voided.

The question remained in this condition until 1860, when Bischoff and Voit published the results of a long series of experiments made with a dog. They found that, even when the animal was kept at rest, the amount of urea voided varied closely in proportion to the variation in the amount of nitrogenous substance given in the food—a fact which they explained on the assumption that there must have been a corresponding increase in the force exercised in the conduct of the actions proceeding within the body itself in connection with the disposal of the increased amount of nitrogeneous substance consumed. Subsequently, however, they found that the amount of urea passed by the animal was, with equal conditions as to food, &c., no greater when he was subjected to labour than when at rest; whilst, on the other hand, the carbonic acid evolved was much increased by such exercise. They accordingly somewhat modified their views.

In 1866 appeared a paper by Professors Fick and Wislicenus, giving the results obtained in a mountain ascent. They found that practically the amount of urea voided was scarcely increased by the labour thus undertaken. Professor Frankland gave an account of these experiments in a lecture at the Royal Institution in the same year; and he subsequently followed up the subject by an investigation of the heat developed in the combustion of various articles of food, applying the results in illustration of the phenomena of the exercise of force.

Lastly, Kellner has made some very interesting experiments with a horse at Hohenheim, the results of which were published last year. In one series, the experiment was divided into five periods, the same food being given throughout; but the animal accomplished different distances, and drew different weights, the draught being measured by a horse-dynamometer. The changes in live-weight, the amount of water drunk, the temperature, the amount of matters voided, and their contents in nitrogen, were also determined.

The result was, that with only moderate labour there was no marked increase in the nitrogen eliminated in the urine, but that with excessive labour the animal lost weight and eliminated more nitrogen. Kellner concluded, accordingly, that, under certain circumstances, muscular action can increase the transformation of albumin in the organism in a direct way; but that, nevertheless, in the first line is the oxidation of the non-nitrogenous matters—carbo-hydrates and fat, next comes in requisition the circulation-albumin, and finally the organ-albumin is attacked.

In reference to these conclusions from the most recent experiments relating to the subject, we may wind up this brief historical sketch of the changes of view respecting it, with the following quotation from our own paper published in 1866:[1]—'. . . all the evidence at command tended to show that by an increased exercise of muscular power there was, with increased requirement for respirable material, probably no increased production and voidance of urea, unless, owing to excess of nitrogenous matter in the food, or a deficiency of available non-nitrogenous substance, or diseased action, the nitrogenous constituents of the fluids or solids of the body were drawn upon in an abnormal degree for the supply of respirable material.'

In conclusion, although I fully agree with Voit, Zuntz, Wolff, and others, that there still remains much for both Chemistry and Physiology to settle in connection with these two questions of '*The Sources of the Fat of the Animal Body*' and '*The Origin of Muscular Power*,' yet I think we may congratulate ourselves on the re-establishment of the true faith in regard to them, so far at least as the most important practical points are concerned.

[1] 'Food in its relation to various exigencies of the animal body.'—*Phil. Mag.*, July 1866.