

enclosed, that, were it not for the modern monastery and the cowed monks who till the soil, it would almost cease to be suggestive of the England of mediæval times, when wastes and forests covered half the land.

If we now pass to the Secondary rocks that lie in the plains, we find a different state of things. In the centre of England, formed of New Red Sandstone and Marl, the soils are for the most part naturally more fertile than in the mountain regions of Cumberland and Wales, or in some of the Palæozoic areas in the extreme south-west of England. When the soft New Red Sandstone and especially the Marl are bare of drift, and form the actual surface, they often decompose easily, and form deep loams, save where the conglomerate beds of the New Red Sandstone come to the surface. These conglomerates consist to a great extent of gravels barely consolidated, formed of water-worn pebbles of various kinds, but chiefly of liver-coloured quartz-rock, like that of some of the conglomerates of the old Red Sandstone, derived from some unknown region, and of silicious sand, sometimes ferruginous. This mixture forms, to a great extent, a barren soil. Some of the old waste and forest lands of England, such as Sherwood Forest and Trentham Park, part of Beaudesert, and the ridges east of the Severn near Bridgnorth, lie almost entirely upon these intractable gravels, or on other sands of the New Red Sandstone, and have partly remained uncultivated to this day. As land however becomes in itself more valuable, the ancient forests are being cut down and the ground enclosed. But a good observer will often infer, from the straightness of the hedges, that such ground has only been lately taken into cultivation, and at a time since it has become profitable to