LITERATURE.

SPEAK A LITTLE LOUDER.

"I have called this way, dear ma'am, to pay
My best respects to you;
How well you look this blessed day,
So young, and fresh, and new.
Our single state is desolate,
The winter nights I'm fearing:"
"Speak a little louder, sir,
I'm rather hard of hearing."

Faint heart and ware from ladye fair
Ne'er won true lover's crown;
Up, gallant men! and boldly dare
In village, or in town,
To raise the voice, so stout and choice,
And never fear gunpowder—
Governments are rather deaf—
Speak a little louder!

We cry all hours, be learning ours,
God said, "Let there be light;"
Let man work with the higher powers,
And bless the blind with sight.
In vain we cry to men on high—
They are surely deaf, I'm fearing;
Speak a little louder, sirs,
They are rather hard of hearing!

Oh, let the dame of scarlet fame
Hear soon your well-rung shout;
And all her children read in flame—
"Christ in, and parsons out."
Nor let the dame confine her name
To Rome, nor overcrowd her;
She's rather hard of hearing, sirs,
Speak a little louder!

Oh, poor man, to the hustings walk,
And poll aloud your vote;
Or write in chalk, a little talk
Of what you know of note.
You have most cause to mend the laws—
What can't you vote, I'm fearing?
Speak a little louder, friend,
They are rather hard of hearing!

Perhaps you have no freehold, sir?
Then just speak up a bit:
Or are not yet a householder?
Although you wish for it.
Oh, never fear, just raise a cheer,
You need not buy gunpowder;
There's lots of land, they are only deaf—
Speak a little louder!

Upraise a cry for God on high,
And liberty below;
And chains shall fall before your call,
And echoes ever flow,
Till tyrants hear the hearty cheer
Above their loud gunpowder—
They are very hard of hearing, sirs,
Shout a little louder!

G. B.

Over-Population and its Remedy; or, an Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of the Distress prevailing among the Labouring Classes of the British Islands, and into the Means of Remedying it. By WILLIAM THOMAS THORNTON. 8vo. London: 1846.

OUR chief subject of difference with Mr. Thornton lies in the first word of his title-page, and the first lines of his book. "By over-population," he says, "is to be understood, throughout the following pages, that condition of a country in which part of the inhabitants, though able-bodied and capable of labour, are *permanently* unable to earn a *sufficiency* of the necessaries of life." We confess ourselves unable to understand this definition: and, even if this be our fault and not the author's, we wish he had not adopted, as a comprehensive title for the evils which affect the labouring classes, a word which seems to us rather calculated to raise unnecessary controversies than to convey definite ideas. And we are quite sure that if "over-population exists among us, Mr. Thornton has not succeeded in the difficult task of pointing out its "remedy." But, viewing his work as what it more justly might profess to be—an inquiry into many circumstances connected with the "condition-of-England-question"—particularly as regards the agricultural classes, with suggestions respecting measures now or lately under consideration for their relief, we have found in it much to instruct us, and not a little to praise, even where we are forced to disagree.

There is one sense, undoubtedly, in which the word "over-population" may be used with sufficient, if not absolutely strict accuracy. Wherever the bad economy of labour causes it to be expended in part unproductively, there over-population may be said to exist. If, by the habits of a country, two men, with inferior skill and machinery are required to execute work which one might perform, the labour of one of the two is redundant. Thus, in agriculture, (to employ the instance which appears most familiar to Mr. Thornton, and is generally used by him for the purpose of illustration,) there is a certain proportion between capital and labour which, with the existing appliances of skill and machinery, may be termed the most advantageous. In the present state of agricultural skill, there is a certain extent of land which a certain number of labourers can cultivate to the greatest advantage; that is, with the greatest net return above wages and profits. The same land divided between a much greater number of Cottiers, cultivating it by the spade, might yield a larger gross return; but the net return, over and above the wages of the cultivator, would be much less. Labour is not so productive in the latter as in the former case; and the land is over-peopled. In this sense, the handloom weavers form a class of redundant workmen. Ireland is over-peopled by Cottiers. Every country, indeed, suffers more or less from the same evil; for there is probably no country where, in some department or other of industry, many more hands are employed than would be necessary to create the greatest amount of surplus wealth, if labour were properly divided, and existing skill properly applied. Inveterate habits, monopolies, customs influencing the tenure of land, the slowness of the process by which surplus labour is absorbed, after the derangements occasioned by changes in fashion, and improvements in machinery—all these are causes tending to produce and maintain "over-population," in this sense of the word.

But this is not Mr. Thornton's meaning. He is not one of those who consider that the waste of labour is in itself, and of necessity, an evil. He is an admirer, as we shall by-and-by see, of the system of cultivation by small proprietors, or small tenants, under which a large proportion of labour is necessarily expended with little or no return. And we are fully prepared to agree with him thus far—that the condition of a community in which much labour is expended for small returns is not, necessarily, an unhappy one. We can imagine a state of society in which industry, and skill, and intelligence, are exerted to the utmost pitch—in which capital is accumulated in comparatively few hands, and applied in the most advantageous manner—in which much surplus wealth exists, and riches and luxury abound—and yet the labourers, the mass of the community, may be habitually poor, discontented, improvident. On the other hand, it is equally possible to suppose a community in which land is divided into small portions—in which great manufacturing and commercial capitals do not exist—in which very little surplus wealth is produced—and yet in which the bulk of the people are morally and physically thriving. Over-population in countries like these, is only theoretically an evil, in as far as it interferes with the production of wealth. But the production of wealth is by no means so important to the real well-being of a nation as its distribution. To attempt to stop the accumulation of capital, the consolidation of farms, the economising of labour, where the tendencies of things are working in that direction, would be simply madness. But it might be scarcely less unwise to exchange existing happiness for prospects of wealth; and to convert (could such a thing be done) the people of Tuscany, Flanders, and the better parts of Switzerland, into communities made up of capitalists and day labourers.

"Over-population," he says again, "may be shortly defined to be a deficiency of employment for those who live by labour; or a redundancy of the labouring class above the number of persons that the fund applied to the remuneration of labour can maintain in comfort. If so, the mere fact that a number of agricultural labourers and their families are supported wholly or partly out of the poor-rates, in our agricultural districts, is no proof of general over-population; though Mr. Thornton sometimes appears to treat it as such. So long as paupers are supported out of the rent, or surplus revenue of the land, it is plain that, in a country not exporting raw produce, pauperism does not indicate a redundant population. The Dorsetshire landlord is said to spend a fifth or a sixth of his rent in the support of the poor: That is to say, a proportion of the raw produce which is raised from his land is used or exchanged for food and clothing for paupers. If the paupers did not exist, he would expend it on maintaining additional servants, or in procuring comforts and luxuries. These must be either of English manufacture or foreign produce, purchased with English Manufactures. Either way, the income which he now devotes to the maintenance of paupers in his parish, would maintain an additional population, either as servants or artizans. If his parish be "over-peopled," then Lancashire is under-peopled to the same extent. This is a case of vicious distribution of the funds for the maintenance of labour, not of *general* over-population. And thus Mr. Thornton himself remarks, that in Kent, (which previously swarmed with paupers) "since the passing of the new Poor-Law, the rate of wages has not fallen, but remains at the old amount of 10s. or 12s. a-week; thus showing, that previously, while so many of the poor were maintained in idleness, *the funds for profitably employing them were not really wanting, but were merely misdirected.*"

Population can be shown to be redundant in Mr. Thornton's sense, only where there has been a considerable and permanent fall in the rate of wages. Wherever this has occurred, there has been either an undue increase of labourers, or a diminution of the fund for their maintenance. Suppose, for instance, a sudden and copious accession to their numbers: wages would fall; their condition would deteriorate; so would their productive powers. The work which had been formerly well done by two would now be ill done by three. And at last the rate of wages would become permanently fixed at a lower standard. During the state of transition, such a county might properly be described as labouring under an excess of population. But when wages and habits had settled at a new level; when the wealthier generation had gone by; when all things had adapted themselves to the altered circumstances; though the later state of the country would be far less happy than the earlier, still the term "over-population" would cease to describe that state. There might be hands enough, and no more, to do the existing work with existing skill, and for wages suited to the existing standard.

Could it therefore be shown, which we do not believe it can, that the condition of the labouring classes in England has, in the course of some generations, undergone that change for the worse which we have here supposed *immediate*, it would still be a careless and unmeaning use of the word to call England "over-peopled." Nor is this a mere philosophical cavil. The notion we here impugn has been the source of many mistakes, and is likely to produce more. It was, perhaps, from ideas similar to Mr. Thornton's—namely, that the poor-laws, under the old system of abuses, produced a permanent over-population—that many of those who supported their reform, entertained the belief that its direct effect would be to raise wages. The expectation, we fear, was fallacious. And the disappointment of hopes which had no substantial foundation, may have contributed to direct a portion of popular feeling against a law of which the real value lay far deeper—in the indirect influence it was intended to exercise, first on the moral, and ultimately on the physical, well-being of the people.

Mr. Thornton, however, thinks it sufficient for his purpose, if he can show that there has *at any time* been a depreciation of the condition of the English peasantry. He carefully examines Sir F. Eden's well-known storehouse of statistical facts, and traces the condition of the mass of the people, even from the Saxon times to the present;—following the same course, and arriving at many of the same conclusions, with Malthus. Both allow, that in as far as the accessible evidence goes, the reward of labour was never so high as in the fifteenth century: both are forced—if any reliance is to be placed on tables of wages and prices—to fix the golden age of "merry old England" in the middle of the obscure and turbulent period of the "wars of the Roses." But Mr. Malthus, while admitting the evidence, regarded the high wages of the reigns of Henry VI and VII., from whatever cause they may have arisen, as exceptional. He thinks, that compared with what they were both before and after, "they were evidently peculiar, and could not, therefore, be permanent." Mr. Thornton, while he cannot deny, what the same authorities prove, that this temporary elevation followed an "extraordinary rise," endeavours to account for it by an extraordinary extension of employment—a very easy mode of getting over a difficulty, for it is purely an hypothesis—yet seems anxious to represent it as the normal state of the English peasantry; —to establish that their subsequent decline must be regarded as an abandonment of the "high social position" which they had attained, as a proof of their redundant numbers—as an "exchange of the ease and comfort which they had once enjoyed, for difficulties and privations." "How has it happened," he asks, "that the numbers of the people are now, and have been throughout the last three hundred and sixty years, in excess to their *former proportion* to the amount of employment? For the present *degradation* of the English labourer has not been effected within a recent period; the golden age of the working class was followed *without any interval* by the iron age which still subsists."—Now if this be so—if in point of fact wages fell, more than three centuries ago, from their boasted height to a state of depression which has continued ever since—of what possible practical utility can it be to compare the present condition of things with one so utterly past and forgotten? How very idle a proposition it is, were it a true one, that England is now over-peopled—in comparison, not with the times of our fathers and forefathers —but in comparison with the England of Chaucer and Lydgate!

That the fall from this state of prosperity *was* great and rapid, Mr. Thornton is forced to show from the same authorities on which he relies for the prosperity itself. From the end of the reign of Henry VII. to the middle of that of Elizabeth, wages, generally speaking, seem to have had a downward tendency. Nor are the causes easy of ascertainment. Even Malthus rather evades than meets the question; and Mr. Thornton's solution is not convincing. The change from agriculture to sheep farming may have rendered population temporarily abundant in some districts; the conversion of a great number of small owners of long leases, particularly under the monasteries, into farmers at rack-rent, (a change not yet completed in the western parts of England;) the disuse of the custom of employing large bodies of idle retainers—all these circumstances may have had a more or less injurious effect for the time on the condition of the labourers. Even with the high authority of Malthus against us, we are much inclined to think that the fall in the value of the precious metals, which followed the discovery of America, had more share than any other cause, in producing that continuous and steady fall of real wages which took place during the greater part of the sixteenth century.

Be this, however, as it may, the condition of the agricultural labourer, "began sensibly to improve" towards the end of the same century. "Although," says Mr. Thornton, "agricultural labourers were now raised a good deal above the depth to which they had sunk, they were very far from having regained the prosperity which they had once enjoyed;" but he should have added, that this "once" refers only to the exceptional period already mentioned. There seems to have been a stationary or declining period about the time of the Rebellion; when for several years very high prices prevailed. But from 1670 to 1770 or thereabouts, there was a decided increase of comfort; and this seems to have been the period of the principal changes in the outward condition and habits of the labourer, from those of earlier times—the substitution of wheaten for inferior bread—glass windows for shutters—finer for coarser clothing. Yet, says Mr. Thornton, throughout the first half of the reign of George III., the condition of the English peasantry "must have presented a very melancholy aspect to all who could perceive how much the foundations of their independence were *undermined.*" Why undermined? Mr. Thornton himself shows that they had enough to subsist on, and work to do. The ordinary traditions of the time represent them rather as a coarse, bold, and thriving race, than as suffering, oppressed and half-starved. But we are to look still further, it seems, for the threatened period of deterioration, which appears ever to recede before us. In 1795, it is true, bad times for the peasantry began. War, and bad seasons, and the anti-jacobin terrors—which produced the worst tampering with principle in the poor-law administration that had yet been seen—told heavily against them. "Many persons living can well recollect how severe the sufferings of the labouring class were at that time, and with what difficulty they continued to struggle through them" But the evil was only temporary. About 1810, wages again began to rise. "Agricultural wages were considerably higher between 1811 and 1820, than in the ten years immediately preceding." Let us proceed to the next decennium. Money wages fell (1820—1823,) but not in proportion to the fall in the price of provisions. "From a comparison of wages and prices it does not appear that the laborer's condition was now *further* deteriorated," (we have just seen that it had been *improving* for ten years before.) "On the contrary, it was probably, if anything, a little *improved*, though the alteration either way was too small to deserve notice." This brings us to 1833. No one, we think, will suppose that any changes which have taken place since that year, amount to a substantial fall of wages, or deterioration of the condition of the peasantry. And now with Mr. Thornton's own chronicle of wages fairly analyzed we are surely entitled to ask our readers where is the evidence of that falling off in the condition of the people, which is the very foundation of his theory? We have not prayed in aid the evidence afforded by the advance of manufacturing industry: we restrict our enquiry to the field selected by the author himself, that of agricultural labour. And we ask again, on what authority is it that he affirms that "during the last forty or fifty years, the English peasantry have been continually and rapidly *declining*;" when his own Statistics prove, as we have shown, that, from 1811 to 1830, agricultural wages were gradually

rising? The truth is, we cannot help suspecting, that Mr. Thornton began by assuming his hypothesis of a redundant population and declining wages, and afterwards examined the evidence on the subject. Much too fair and honest to mis-state that evidence, and yet too wedded to his theory to modify it, he has suffered himself to slip into the inconsistency of proving one thing, and then assuming another, as the foundation of further argument.

The conclusion to which we are irresistably led is, that there is no proof of the condition of agricultural labourers in England having deteriorated for the last three centuries at least. What may have been their condition in earlier times, is matter for antiquarian investigation, rather than the real importance at present. To say that in England there is now a "redundancy of population," compared with England under the Plantagenets, or England under the Heptarchy, is mere shadowy assumption, utterly unserviceable towards any of the serious purposes of the day. The urgency of present questions is too great, the demand on the energy and resources of every well-wisher to his country too pressing, to admit of trifling with subjects of such vital interest. If art did less, nature did far more for the individual man, than she is permitted to do at the present day. When Manchester was a village, when wolves and bears were chased at Highgate, when three-fourths of England were covered with forests, the mere freedom of space and elbow-room was in itself a source of many pleasures, of which the very memory is faded away. Nor was the labourer's physical condition to be deplored. He had, in general, abundance of coarse food; for the best lands alone were cultivated, and inferior kinds of stock were cheaply fed in the woods and commons. His dress and lodging were miserable enough, no doubt; but probably less so in proportion than those of the Baron. His life was, indeed, exposed to fearful evils from which we now live in happy exemption;—famines very different from their so-called successors—epdemics of a very different order from our cholera—lawless violences—savage laws. But the chance of great catastrophes never goes for much in the estimate of human happiness. The very serf of those days, except when he happened to quarrel with the royal forresters, was, in some respects, freer, and therefore happier, than the modern hind;—from whom the common, the village green, the field-path, have one by one been taken by law, until he is as effectually barred out from the enjoyment of nature as the cotton-spinner shut up in his factory. These times can never return; but the great substitute for the physical enjoyments of earlier days is to be found in intellectual development and culture.

Fortunately, Mr. Thornton's misconceptions on the subject, if such they be, lie on the surface only, and affect his judgment on theoretical subjects rather than on practical ones. Assuredly he is no sentimental economist—attributing the sufferings of the poor to the hard-heartedness of the rich, and the grinding tyranny of capital; or to any other of the false grounds on which the easy philanthropy of the day loves to expiate. No one can more plainly assert the stern and unpopular truth, that the labourers are themselves responsible, in the long run, for most of the evils which beset their condition. No one more distinctly shows that the ultimate causes of prosperity or suffering lie in the habits and the wills of men themselves—formed and exercised from generation to generation. It may, therefore, be urged, that his use of the word "over-population" is harmless, even if not philosophically accurate. But, unfortunately, it gives encouragement to errors from which Mr. Thornton may be free; but which are easily deducible from the expressions he has permitted himself to employ. The very name of over-population is provocative of quackery. It invites the projector and the speculator. A redundant population, on the one hand; on the other, unpeopled continents, waste lands, bogs, fens to reclaim—swamps to drain, roads to make, factories to construct—these things stand in such inviting approximation, that it is no wonder there are many who cannot be brought to look beyond the first and most attractive project. And thus, fallacies refuted day after day by sad experience, are again and again reduced into experiment; for there are some follies which never grow old—some speculators who, after the bursting of an hundred bubbles, will still watch with unaltered faith and enthusiasm the stately outset of the hundred-and-first.

If it be true, as Mr. Thornton believes, that the source of the evils which afflict the labouring classes is mainly in themselves; if we are able to show that the price of a man's industry is ultimately determined by the value which he himself sets upon it—by his own self-respect and self-restraint—then it is evident that the remedies or pretended remedies, may be classed under two heads. The first are those which attack the root of the evil; the latter, its outward symptoms. The first are directed against the causes which produce the anomalies complained of; the latter, to redress the anomalies themselves. The first resemble a medical treatment founded on principle; the latter, the exhibition of specifics, or in plain English, quack medicines. Education, well-regulated poor-laws—(so far as these are not simply measures of police,) laws interfering with contracts, and regulating times and conditions of labour, sanitary provisions, institutions for the encouragement of saving;—all these, and many more, whether well or ill conceived, belong to the first class. The effect they may produce—or by far the greatest part—must be indirect, not direct. They must act by reforming the labourer, not by improving his outward condition. They may render him fit to earn higher wages, but they do not, in the first instance, raise his rate of wages. They are to give him greater strength and higher faculties; but they do not increase his remuneratton irrespectively of augmented strength and powers. Poor-law systems of indiscriminate relief—emigration, home colonization, allotments, public works—these belong to the second class. They are empirical remedies, the object of which is directly to ameliorate his condition, not to render him capable of securing a better condition for himself.

Omitting free trade, as now, happily, a *fait accompli*, let us take a glance at the other remedies of both descriptions here chiefly dwelt on. That Mr. Thornton is a supporter of the principle of the Poor-Laws' Amendment will easily be supposed; after the indications we have given of his views respecting the original causes of that uneasy state of the labouring classes which he calls over-population. We do not purpose making any extracts from this part of his work; but those who read it, if they do not find much that is original on this hacknied subject, will find that his views are enforced with simplicity and straightforwardness, which may, perhaps, produce an effect in quarters where severer logic would be thrown away. His home-thrusts against the false benevolence and popular cant of the day, will come with greater force from one whom the general tenor of his book shows to be anything rather than an adherent of the well-abused sect of modern Economists. And he claims for himself no more than that common justice which he is ready to show to others. "One who devotes a volume to an inquiry into the best means of promoting the welfare of the poor, may fairly take credit for taking some interest in the subject, however widely his views respecting it may differ from those of his critics. He may entertain all the opinions expressed above with regard to poor-laws, and yet be a sincere and very ardent friend of the poor. Measures for increasing the dependence of the poor upon charity can only benefit one portion of the labouring class, in the same proportion as they injure another; and, if carried far, must inevitably involve all in ruin. The true way to improve the condition of the able-bodied is, in all cases short of the want of the necessaries of life, to throw them entirely on their own resources; but at the same time to augment these resources to the utmost—to make their own industry their sole dependence, but to enlarge the field within which that industry may be exerted. To make them public pensioners, is at best only to alter the distribution of the fund for the payment of wages; but to produce any unalloyed advantage, the equilibrium between that fund and the number of persons dependent upon it must be restored—the one must be augmented, or the other must be diminished."

Of Education, considered merely with reference to its indirect action in improving the habits and strengthening the character, and thereby putting into men's own hands the means to improve their economical position, Mr. Thornton speaks with great decision and plainness. He knows that "almost any intellectual exercise is better than none at all;" and he knows the reason—not because of the mere value of the knowledge acquired, but because no knowledge whatever can be acquired without exertion, and discipline and self-restraint. No man who does not start with this conviction can be hearty in the great work of our day. "In the largest sense of the word," he says, "every one of the measures already recommended in these pages for the advancement of the labouring class, may be regarded as contributing to education; for it is only by its influence on the mind, that an accession of comforts can tend to dissuade people from premature marriages. Even mere schooling, however, is calculated to have some effect of the same kind. Whatever exercises the mind, developes its powers; mental power can only be expanded in thought; and a man who thinks at all, is never so likely to think as when he is about to act. To whatever sort of culture, therefore, the mind be subjected, there is every probability that more or less free thought will be among the products." Thus much for the slowest in its operations, most distant in its fruits, and least encouraging to the sanguine and the impatient—but assuredly the most substantial of all the remedies which wisdom can suggest—for the evils of our present condition.

With similar good sense and moderation Mr. Thornton speaks of sanitary regulations, "short time" acts, and other interferences with the habits or the contracts of laboring people. At the same time, we wish he had devoted a little more attention to the principle of this class of public measures. They form, in truth, one of the most important topics of the day. England has been long in unlearning its inveterate prejudices, in favour of the interference of government with private enterprise, to protect particular classes and interests. Perhaps it has now to learn the lesson, that there are other objects for the sake of which government may be rightly called on to interfere, to an extent as yet unusual. When the "let-alone" policy was first advocated by Economists, the interference which they had in view, and denounced as noxious, was altogether of the first description. Their earliest endeavours were directed towards liberating society from the sordid tyranny of Class Interests, employing the State as their engine of selfish oppression. It is not unnatural, but it is surely illogical, to extend the same objections to a species of interference exerted with an entirely different object. Spain prohibited the cultivation of the vine in the Americas in order to protect the Spanish vine-growers. China prohibits the cultivation of opium as a drug pernicious to public health and morality. Whether China be right or wrong, it is obvious that to condemn her policy on the same ground on which we condemn that of Spain is to confound matters essentially different. There are already instances too numerous and notorious to require enumeration, in which governments interfere to prevent or limit contracts—not with a view to the supposed pecuniary advantage of one or other of the contracting parties—not to protect the public in general from nuisance or inconvenience—but simply to protect the contractor himself from the consequences of an engagement fraught with physical or moral evils, which he is unable to appreciate; still more reasonably, to protect others from being driven by the hard necessity of competition to bind themselves knowingly, to their own prejudice. It is a mere evasion to say that these are exceptional cases. Once admit the principle, that government may rightly exercise such influence—and the usage of every day sanctions it—and every case seeming to call for it, is to be argued on its own merits. And so it must be with reference to the limitation of the hours of labour—the most knotty question of this class now before the public. Its supporters urge that the duration of labor which men will engage to undergo is too much for their bodily and mental health. They say that even high wages, thus acquired, bring little of blessing with them to men spiritless from over-exertion, in homes rendered squalid and uncomfortable; because there is neither time nor inclination left for the exercise of household economy. They say that hasty marriages, early deaths, constant improvidence, brutish and irrational habits of living, are the necessary concomitants of a state of things in which the whole six days are devoted to toil. They even affirm that man deteriorates with these evil influences, not only in his higher qualities, but also in his inferior capacity as a machine of production, and that with shorter labor he might do more or better work. The time is surely past for answering these arguments by mere assertions of general doctrine. Fair reasons must be given for supposing that the point has been already reached, (some point there evidently must be,) at which further interference would do more harm, by diminishing the productiveness of the fund for the maintenance of labour, than it could do good, by its influence on the character of the laborer. And, since every step which the legislature has hitherto taken in the same direction has been met with similar objections and denunciations, none of which have yet been realised, the burden of proof seems to lie rather on the opponents than supporters of further reform.

To leave the consideration of fundamental remedies, and turn to others of a very different description, we find Mr. Thornton attaching even less value to Emigration than we might ourselves be disposed to attribute to it But if little disposed to embrace this once favorite project, he makes up for it by his admiration of the more modern *panacea* for agricultural evils—small farms, or small allotments. We must, however, distinguish—though Mr. Thornton does not—between two very different matters. When he argues, that the subdivision of *farms* would be beneficial to the landlord, because "no rents are more punctually paid than those of *cottage allotments*," he is certainly in some danger of leading his readers into a confusion exceedingly prevalent on this subject. The subdivision of farms, and the formation of cottage allotments in aid of wages, are altogether different processes;—different in their object, as well as their probable effects. They have absolutely nothing to do with each other; or rather, they are inconsistent schemes, the system of cottage allotments presupposes large farms, and a considerable demand for farm laborers. The system of small farms supposes the absence or the scarcity of mere farm laborers as a class, and the general cultivation of the land by the hands of its occupiers.

With regard to cottage allotments, the subject has been already so much canvassed, that we do not intend at present to resume it. The subdivision of farms, to which Mr. Thornton appears equally attached, is a matter of far greater consequence, and requires more attentive investigation. He begins by misconceiving, if we understand him rightly, the ordinary economical objection to it. "The one thing needful," he says, "is to make land yield the largest possible surplus, after adequately remunerating the cultivator." And small farms, he maintains, yield a larger surplus produce and rent per acre, than large ones. Therefore "labour is much more productive on "small farms than on large ones." Now, were it even the fact that small farms pay a higher rent per acre than large ones, we have already seen that it would by no means follow, that labor was more productive. Twenty Cottiers, by spade cultivation, may make a given number of acres yield a larger return, perhaps a larger rent, than a single farmer and two laborers. But unless the surplus of the return, after paying wages and replacing stock, is greater in the proportion of twenty to three, it is plain that each man's labor is less productive in the first case than the last. More is drawn from the land by accumulating labor on it. But, after a certain point has been reached, the greater the quantity of labor, the less is the net return which each man's labor yields. Now it is precisely this net return which makes nations rich. Precisely in proportion to their surplus revenue over the remuneration of the producers, in the shape of profits and wages, is their power to pay taxes, maintain armies, execute great works, besides the mere raw article of population.

So far is clear enough. But when we are investigating the happiness, not the wealth of nations, then, as we have seen already, the prospect becomes far more doubtful; and questions of more difficult solution press upon our attention. It is vain to endeavour to conceal from ourselves the evils of a system under which man's labor is rendered as productive as possible by the assistance of large capitals; but under which the laborer is necessarily dependent entirely on that capital for his employment. Large farms and a landless peasantry, go inevitably together. And, let us disguise the fact as we may, it is only too true that the landless labourer's condition, is rarely as happy in a mere physical point of view—never as high in the social scale, by reason of the moral qualities which it engenders—as that of the small proprietor, or the farmer with a fixed interest in the soil.

But these are idle comparisons at best. It would be as impossible, we fear, notwithstanding Mr. Thornton's persuasives to subdivide our farms, and scatter our great manufacturing and commercial wealth among more numerous holders, as to stop the progress of human skill and enterprise. Everything tends the other way;—not only our habits and institutions, but, more especially, all our improvements in mechanical skill and social science. It is needless to expatiate on the advantages which large capitalists have over small ones, in every department of business. However ingenious the arguments Mr. Thornton adduces to the contrary, they are too familiarly known to require to be controverted. Now the practical limit to the concentration of capital in few hands—and the only one—is the difficulty of superintending a large business, increasing as the business extends. It is this difficulty, varying in different instances, which, more than any other circumstance, determines the relative amount of capital ordinarily invested in different kinds of business. Now every improvement in commercial knowledge and practice—communication, locomotion, machinery, and so forth—tends to diminish this difficulty. Banking, for instance, and Bills of Exchange, are inventions which, by simplifying commercial transactions, must have infinitely increased the facility of wielding commercial capital, and of transferring the trade of the world from pedlars to merchants. It is impossible to conjecture the effect which roads and canals, and post-offices, and stage-coaches must have had in the same direction. But what shall we say of railways, and the electric telegraph! How enormous must be the advantages which these will afford to the great capitalist, by enabling him to concentrate, under his single direction, far greater forces, and put in practice far greater combinations, than he possibly could before; and how greatly will they tell in his favour in his struggle with his poorer competitor! No one can mistake the tokens of progressive change throughout Britain in this respect. Perhaps one of the most striking economical signs of the times—more so than the increase of farms—is the growing application of large capital to retail business. Already great retail houses are extending branches over the country; and the ancient race of small shopkeepers is probably doomed to a complete, though gradual, extinction.

As far, then, as human sagacity can forecast, the course of things, unless altered by some revolution, will continue to tend towards the division of society into the classes of landlords,