

and competence ; on the other, rags and tatters, wives abandoned, parents neglected, children left to the hazard of casual charity, and too often a dark shadow of vice and wretchedness following in the train of our vaunted institutions. But there is another special fallacy involved in the objections to peasant properties. We are told to compare ourselves with those countries where the great majority of the people are engaged in agriculture, and to mark their condition. We are told, with a singularly lame species of reasoning, that France is a nation of peasants ; that France has peasant properties ; and, consequently, that if we have peasant properties, we shall become a nation of peasants also. But, in the first place, the question is not whether France may have run rather far in one direction, but whether we have not run incomparably farther in the other ; and, in the second place, France has at present no other means of employing her population except on the soil, whereas we can employ a hitherto unknown proportion of our people in manufacturing and commercial industry. No disposition of the land could ever again reduce Britain to the condition of France, because we have profitable manufactures, holding out the prospect of a higher reward than can be derived from agriculture ; and consequently, it is as absurd to suppose that our people should again return to mere tillage, as that they should return to the hunting and savage state of the earlier ages. The question of peasant properties does not affect the majority of our population, but only that portion actually engaged in the culture of the soil ; and here we believe that the allocation of a certain portion of land to our labouring agriculturists would go a great way to restore the stability and independence of our country population, and perhaps to revive those homely virtues which were once more common than they are now, and which have waned exceedingly within the memory of those who are still alive. Of the positive advantages of having a peasantry rooted and