

one enclosure, may be said to constitute a Trades' Union in itself,* and all the artificial extension and elaborate officialism of the later Union organization, seeking to embrace whole trades, nay, to constitute national and even international federations, can add little or nothing to the power possessed already by the operative masses on the spot where employed, by the mere fact of their conscious indispensableness to keep profitably at work the capital engaged in large concerns, and sunk in buildings, machinery, and material. That there will always be union in their common interest amongst masses of work-people we hold to be as certain as that no ambitiously extended organization of that union can give it a force which does not already belong to it in the nature of things. And it would really seem as if the great body of work-people were of the same opinion. "As yet," says Mr.

* On this point we are able to cite the testimony, unexceptionable to that purpose, of Mr. George Potter, who probably did not perceive the inference which the following words must at once suggest to the reader :—

"Take the case of one master on one side, and a thousand men on the other; his position as proprietor, capitalist, and employer, gives him a power which, if not quite equal to the united power of his thousand men, is immensely too great for any one among the thousand to cope with single-handed; whereas let the whole number combine in one demand for what they conceive to be no more than their due, and then the parties would be equally matched."—*Contemporary Review*, June, 1870, p. 400.

It is not very easy to understand what more can be wanted in the shape of effective representation of the feelings and interests of employed and employers than such an agency as has for years been supplied by the Boards of Conciliation established in Nottingham, the Staffordshire Potteries and Wolverhampton, of the satisfactory working of which full evidence was given to the Trades' Union Commissioners by Mr. Mundella, M.P., Mr. Hollins, and Mr. Rupert Kettle, "These Boards," say the Commissioners in their Final Report, "require no complicated machinery, no novel division of profits, no new mode of conducting business; they need no Act of Parliament, no legal powers or penalties. All that is needed is that certain representative employers and workmen should meet at regular stated times, and amicably discuss around a table the common interests of their common trade or business. There is not a trade or business in the United Kingdom in which this system might not at once be adopted; and we see no reason why, in every case, results should not follow from the establishment of Boards of Conciliation, as satisfactory as those at Nottingham and in the Potteries, to which we should look hopefully for a peaceful, prosperous future for the interests of this country."

Thornton, "there are very few trades in the United Kingdom in which more than 10 per cent. of the men employed are Unionists; there is but one, that of the plasterers, in which as many as half are. In counting up their future conquests they are decidedly reckoning without their hosts. Their progress hitherto has been due less to their own strength than to their opponents' weakness of purpose."

Mr. Thornton, in his last publication "On Labor," &c., which has attracted more attention from its dashing style of moral paradox and social prophecy than his "Plea for Peasant Proprietors" did, some score and odd years back, till Mr. Mill endorsed its most hazarded and amazing statements (of which more anon), somewhere likens himself to Saul sitting at the feet of Mill, his Gamaliel. In this last publication the modern Saul requires in a singular manner the flattering acceptance by his Gamaliel of his former agrarian lucubrations, by taking into his hands the task of showing up the baselessness of a theory on which Mr. Mill (with other economists) had founded his doctrine of wages, and his disbelief of the power of Trades' Unions to effect their artificial elevation. Now, Mr. Thornton has taken it into his head to turn champion of Trades' Unions—though on grounds upon which they certainly would not accept his championship. In assuming it, however,—with ulterior objects which we shall presently see—he had first of all to disarm Mr. Mill of his wage-fund theory. Very opportunely he found that theory already demolished, and had only to appropriate a demonstration already done to his hand.

We think we hear the unsophisticated reader exclaim, "What on earth is a wage-fund theory?" Let the unsophisticated reader rejoice with us: a Wage-fund theory is a thing—or unthing (to borrow a German idiom)—which is henceforth shunted fairly out of the way of future discussion of all questions affecting labor and labor's wages.

Mr. Longe, the barrister, in a pamphlet published four or five years back, which, at the time of its appearance, received less notice than it deserved—none at all at the hands of political economists,