

According as we answer these questions must we conceive of the social consequences of the particular change.

Each of the various ways in which the new sheep-farming was introduced needs to be investigated afresh; and we may well begin with that which was most far-reaching in its consequences—the removal from the soil of the customary tenants.

It is hardly necessary to explain that the kernel of the mediæval manor was a group of tenants, called in earlier times *villains*, and known in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as *customary tenants* and *copyholders*. These copyholders did not hold their arable lands in continuous stretches, in considerable pieces, such as we now call "fields," grouped round a farm-house; they held them in a number of acre or half-acre strips, scattered over the two or three enormous areas, each some hundreds of acres in size, then known as "the fields." In earlier times no villein had more than from twenty to fifty (usually thirty) of these acres; and no two strips held by one man were contiguous: and, although a good deal of consolidation had since taken place, the customary holdings were still as a rule small, and held in scattered pieces. But if sheep-farming was to be introduced instead of tillage, it was necessary that the great stretches of "fields" should be, partially at least, hedged or fenced in; and the open acres of corn, oats, or fallow superseded by pasture. And this did actually take place to a very considerable extent. But here a distinction has to be drawn. In the period from the accession of Elizabeth to the middle of the seventeenth century—when the agrarian revolution stopped for a time, to be renewed a hundred years later—during that period enclosures were usually effected with the consent of all the land-holders concerned. The result, so far as regards the tenants, was only that they now obtained, instead of some thirty scattered strips, which they had been obliged to cultivate in a particular way, four or five fields of six or seven acres each, which they were free henceforward to employ