

Bad Times among the Farmers.

TIMES never were so bad before,
Some say, who know no better,
Poor people once, one half, not more
Of them could read a letter.
For teachers, they were at a loss,—
There was no Sunday Schools;
Who say the times grow worse and worse,
They only talk like fools.
Farmers are better cloth'd and fed,
'Tis plain enough to see;
When young, and when they call'd me Ned,
It was not so with me.

Brought up a shepherd, tho' a farmer's son,
My clothing then it mostly was home-spun,
My stockings did my mother's taste display,
Black and white wool she mixt to make them grey;
But then the richest farmer's wife in town,
Would go to Church in linsy-wolsley gown.
A farmer's wife we us'd to call her Dame,—
Now farmers' wives must have a finer name.
A farmer's daughter must be called "Miss,"—
What but my "Lady," can come after this:
And I have seen them stand in Market-places
Selling butter—and veils over their faces!
Though peace and plenty makes all good men glad,
Some farmers still cry out they make times bad;
To call such good times bad, 's a sin and shame,
While they themselves have been the most to blame.
They took farms at high rents & long leases you know
They would not believe corn would ever be low.
The way they still go on to seek redress,
They know will bring great numbers to distress.
And what they get by Corn Bills after all,
Its only robbing Peter to pay Paul:
And, notwithstanding all the farmers say,
The times are getting better every day:
Farmers are getting wisdom and more sence,
Tho' some have learn'd it a great expence;
'Tis for their ignorance they suffer now,
And that has done much harm all must allow.
'T would make good times, if they, with all their might
Would turn from doing wrong, to doing right.
To mend the times, by most it will be granted—
True Christianity is all that's wanted.
I've heard some farmers say where is the harm,
To rent one thousand acres in one farm?
There would be little harm we must allow,
If there was no one else to live but you.
Who grasp more business than they ought to hold,
They often break or die before they're old;
Short'ning their lives; it seems a righteous doom;
Or else for others there would be no room.
If this was not the portion of their cup,
All the small farms would soon be swallowed up.
Upon the Yorkshire wolds, I know them well;—
At Cottam, where my grandfather did dwell:
My forefathers, by records it appears,
Were farmers there above two hundred years.
Without his neighbour's knowledge, as by stealth,
One farmer leas'd the whole unto himself;
Then, twenty families were in the town;
Nineteen are gone, their houses all pull'd down;
A Chapel stands neglected on the hill,
And preaching once a month is kept up still.
When looking on the ruins as I pass,
I naturally cry out, Alas! alas!
This is a proof to me well understood,
That large farms always do more harm than good.
In times of scarcity with them all's well,
But what to do with plenty, they can't tell;
Some would advise the Council of the Nation,
To make a law to check the population;
There schemes of making fewer mouths to eat,
Could never raise the prices of their wheat:
Should corn again be dear, which, God forbid,
Would wages rise as fast? They never did.
Excepting war, that's ruinous at best;
Large farms have done more harm than all the rest.
'Twas better for the poor, and well it might,
When every cottage had a common right,
And every family might keep a cow:
But all good men lament 'tis not so now;
His garden then, although it was not big,
It grew him stuff enough to keep a pig;
His orchard, though but small, was full of trees,
And he could keep both geese, and fowls, and bees.
The labourer then could work for little money,
And lived as in a land of milk and honey.
While they are not allowed to till the ground,
In every parish Paupers will abound:
Some farmers say they can make it appear,
'Twas better for the poor when corn was dear.
To shew the folly of such silly stuff,
Few words of common sense are quite enough;
To prove that wages now are not so bad,
One guinea a-week was all they ever had:
When corn was dear, that wage altho' call'd great,
It would but purchase then one bushel of wheat:
Sure labourer's wages must be better now,
When one week's wage will nearly purchase two.
Numbers have now just what they had before,—
Twelve shillings a-week—they never had no more.
They must be wicked men and rogues in grain,
Whoever wish dear times to come again.
Those farmers ought to be held up to scorn,
Who pray for low wages, for war, and dear corn.
The Lord himself did more compassion show,
And pour'd down plenty on the world below;
The poor they cry'd for help—their plea prevail'd,
And all monopolizing schemes have fail'd.
In most parts of the world amongst the poor,
The times are getting better every hour.
Let labour have its due, then peace is mine,
And never, never shall my heart repine.
Of some industrious servants I have heard,
Who sav'd some hundred pounds by working hard;
They married—and then they got a discharge;
Could get no work; and farms were all too large:
And numbers such are waiting every where,
To get small farms—they'll get them soon no fear.
Labourers, if peace continue, it is plain,
Will get some land to cultivate again:
Large farms will soon so little profit make,
That those who liv'd extravagant will break:
Large farms will be divided into small,
And then there will be work enough for all.
And now some parishes I understand,
Take each poor family one acre of land;

The labourer can afford the rent to pay,
And poor-rates there, are almost done away:
For by spade culture 'tis ascertain'd now,
Land will bring better crops than by the plough.
They work for farmers when it suits them best,
And that leaves work enough for all the rest;
They work at home when they get none from others,
Masters & servants there they live like brothers:
They're more content, do more in one day now,
Than they would do for parish-pay in two;
And this is the best method still I say,
To mend the poor laws or do them away:
Do this, and all good men will say of you,
God bless the farmers, and God speed the plough.
Some farmers now that scarce can pay their rent,
Their daughters must to boarding school be sent,
Music and dancing there they must be taught,
And they learn every thing but what they ought:
When they come home they go to plays and dances
And fill their heads with novels and romances.
They think of nothing then but of high life,
They're spoil'd for making a good farmer's wife.
To see their pride one scarce can hold their tongue,
They did not dress so vain when I was young:
To see them spinning now is very rare,
But trimming caps and papering their hair.
Their grandfathers when they to market went,
With cheese and bread and ale they were content,
Some of them now on dainty dishes dine,
And after dinner have their punch and wine:
Of good roast beef they cannot eat one bit,
Without rich sauce and mustard unto it;
I've seen such come to th' parish for relief,
And there could neither mustard get nor beef.
This is a well known truth, you all must grant,
That wilful waste it oft makes woeful want.
Rich men may all be useful in their stations
And Smith will tell you what's the wealth of nations:
The greatest number of productive hands,
Is that which always makes the richest lands.
Great numbers to America did go,
For wages there were high, provisions low;
But farmers want provisions high they say,
Although they see its driving trade away:—
Keep prices high—as sure as you are born,
You'll soon have very few to eat your corn:
But keep provisions low—we want no more,
Then trade will flourish as it did before.
The price of wheat the last two hundred years,
Averaged two pounds a quarter it appears;
Abroad its thirty shillings every where,
How can they keep it up at eighty here?
Five thousand families have gone to France,
And if provisions should again advance,
They would be followed by ten thousand more,
To spend their money on a foreign shore.
What ruins manufactures, all allow
In time would ruin agriculture too;
'Tis trade that keeps the farmers on their legs—
Trade is the Goose that lays them Golden Eggs:
The Dunces that kill'd the Goose more gain to make,
Like them, with Corn Bills, soon found his mistake;
And that which always has rich countries made,
'Twas not by agriculture, but free trade.
There are some silly folks in every town,
And they would have all engine-work pull'd down:
Improvement must go on, until it brings
Throughout the world, a better state of things.
To get good times, some wicked people say,
That fighting for them is the only way;
At war and mischief—all such men are glad,
These are the very men that make times bad.
Some people say that they no good can do,
Good times will not be brought about by you:
Good thoughts may be put into black and white,
And if you can but either speak or write,
Good has been done, then try, perhaps there may
By every line you write, or word you say.
Some idle folks into the world they creep,
And only live to eat, and drink, and sleep;
They know not for what purpose they were born,
Except on purpose to consume the corn:
And if their tombstones, when they come to die,
Did not so often flatter them and lie,
Then nothing better would on them be said,
But that they eat and drank, and down they laid.
Cash payments they would help to mend the times,
And that would put an end to many crimes;
For paper money favour'd speculation,
And some have left an honest occupation,
And men we know that were not worth five groats,
And yet for interest Banks have lent them notes;
Great speculations oft made prices rise, [wise:
And then their neighbours thought them wondrous
Sometimes it happen'd prices had a fall,
Then they were broke—and they broke Banks & all.
Make Bankrupt Laws, or do what'er you can,
The loss will fall upon the honest man:
Such men from speculation 'twill withhold,
When Banks are all oblig'd to pay in gold.

Some farmers still are wishing for a war,
For then they say the times were better far;
And war it is well known by every one,
Brought all our heavy debts and taxes on.
Remember you—who want a war once more.
You have not yet paid off the last old score!
The scourge of war it plainly now appears,
Has scourt mankind for many thousand years;
And men, through ignorance, have long been hurl'd
Headlong from crime to crime, throughout the world
The Heathen, they are ignorant, no doubt,
Who sacrifice themselves to Juggernaut;
For one that perishes beneath his car,
Ten thousand men are sacrific'd in war.
While Christians fight, & kill, and pray for plunder
If such religion is despis'd, no wonder.
These wicked men they still desire to see,
The cruel sword devour perpetually.
And on that senseless foolish axiom go,
It always will, be cause it has been so.
There is no doubt but in the time of peace,
The happiness of all mankind increase,
The time approaches fast, we may depend,
So long foretold, when War shall have an end.
The prospect brightens up, on every side,
A great effectual door is open'd wide.
The light is spreading fast, and will increase,
Till all are subject to the Prince of Peace.