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THE LAND PROBLEM

'Home Counties'
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THE LAND PROBLEM

(AN IMPARTIAL SURVEY)

By

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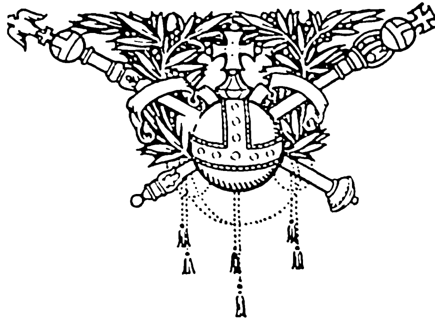

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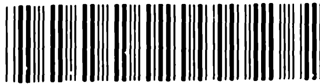

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PREFACE

It was no doubt a little rash to accept a proposal to write 'an impartial survey' of the Rural Problem within the limits of a little book like this.

It is of such immense importance, however, that the busy, town-dwelling newspaper reader should have something like an all-round view of what is commonly known as the Land Question, that it seemed worth while to attempt, even within limited compass, a non-party sketch of its outstanding features. Obviously, the writer has frequently been faced with the necessity of passing by matters of which account ought to be taken in discussing so large a subject.

In regard to the difficulty of steering clear of party politics, it is permissible to say, perhaps, that my writing on rural subjects has been, during a long period, constantly directed towards getting people to consider facts rather than opinions.

To those who lack the opportunity of reading even a small book at a sitting, I may suggest that they should start at Chapter VI., returning to Chapters I. to V. at their

greater leisure. The object of including the history contained in the first six Chapters is to provide a view of the beginnings and rise of our agriculture and the development of the Land Question, which is not to be had in any volume at a popular price.

Readers who are familiar with my writing may recognise, in places, passages and phrases from work of mine in *The Times*, *Quarterly Review*, *Westminster Gazette*, *World's Work*, *Daily News*, *Christian World*, and *Wallace's Farmer* (U.S.A.). I am under obligations to my editors for not being obliged to re-say some things which I have already said about as well as I know how.

At the end of several Chapters, books have been mentioned in which the reader will find further information on the subjects dealt with. Their authors sometimes take a slightly different view from that which I have expressed.

J. W. ROBERTSON SCOTT.

Great Canfield, Dunmow,
Essex.

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THE LAND PROBLEM

I. THE WAY WE HAVE COME

CHAPTER I

FROM THE EARLY BRITON TO THE LORD OF THE MANOR

It is impossible to understand the general situation in Rural Britain, which the politicians are discussing, or to take an intelligent view of such a question as that of the labourer's wage, without knowing something of the beginning and extraordinary development of our farming and of the experiences through which our farmers and labourers have passed.

The first duty of a serious student of the land is, therefore, to apply himself or herself to some at least of the following books :—

A History of Agriculture and Prices in England. By J. E. Thorold Rogers. Clarendon Press. 1866–1912.

The English Village Community. By F. Seebohm. Longmans. 1883.

Villainage in England. By P. Vinogradoff. Clarendon Press. 1892.

The Growth of the Manor. By P. VINOGRADOFF. Sonnenschein. 1905.
The Great Revolt of 1381. By C. W. C. OMAN. Clarendon Press. 1906.
The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields. By G. SLATER. Constable. 1907.
The History of the English Agricultural Labourer. By Professor HASBACH. King. 1908.
The Disappearance of the Small Landowner. By A. H. JOHNSON. Clarendon Press. 1909.
The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century. By R. H. TAWNEY. Longmans. 1912.
The Village Labourer. By J. L. and B. HAMMOND. Longmans. 1911.
English Farming, Past and Present. By R. E. PROTHERO. Longmans. 1912.
Growth of English Industry and Commerce. By Dr Cunningham. Cambridge University Press. 1912.

These authoritative works are to be found in every well-managed public library. But many people are without access to such an institution, and, if they have access, are without the leisure for the study of so many volumes. In the first half-dozen chapters of this book an attempt is made, therefore, to outline, under obvious restrictions of space, the long and complicated story unfolded in these valuable histories of our countryside.

• • • • •

On the sides of the downs of Southern England, or on the hill-sides of Scotland, the cyclist sometimes notices curious terraces,

grass-covered like the uplands to which they belong. The country people may call them 'lynches' or 'elf furrows.' On these terraces, it is believed, the first agriculture in Britain began.

But our ancestors soon adventured down from the hill-sides to do their farming.

This agriculture of the far-off time before the Romans came was much the same as the farming of some African tribes. Our progenitors scratched, dug, or ploughed roughly a bit of wild grass land, sowed it, and reaped the crop. As the virgin soil was full of plant food, it stood a repetition of this treatment, exactly as the prairie land of Canada endures, for a time, continuous wheat growing. When the soil became exhausted, the cultivators moved on to a new tract and worked on that.

It is one of the many instances which are recorded of the enduring character of agricultural customs, that a century ago it was noticed in the West of England that certain lords of the manor used still to let portions of grass commons to be ploughed, cropped for corn, and, after two years' tillage, returned to grass again.

In course of time this system of what has

been called wild field grass husbandry was succeeded by the more settled plan of having one lot of tillage land and a separate lot of grass land.

In order to grasp what communal farming was, we have first to understand that the early farmer was never in business entirely as his own master. The times were much too rough; life and property were far too uncertain. The early agriculturist realised that union was strength. 'Willows may be weak, but they bind other wood.' He farmed not in isolation but in combination. Because life in a village was safer than in a separate dwelling, he lived in a village. In order that the proper cultivation of the land might not be interrupted by men being called away to fight, or by the inferior farming of the lazy or incompetent, he farmed not as an individual but (in the ingenious way to be described later) as a member of a community.

Where did the lord of the manor, whose name and some of whose powers have survived to our own day, come in? The most ancient village community of all is said to have been a body of people who held their land in common, though they must surely have had a chief. However this may be—

and it must be borne in mind that in all these speculations as to our early rural history we are on uncertain ground—we know that when England was conquered by William of Normandy, the land tilled by the village community, and the commons and wastes outside it, were, generally speaking, vested in the lord of the manor, subject to certain undoubted rights of the community.

The lord lived in his rude earth-floored, one-roomed manor house, where he ate and drank, and gave the justice of the times to those over whom he had dominion. He may or may not have had an upper room for his wife and family. This and the number of his out-buildings depended on his importance. So short is our history that one or two Saxon manor houses of stone are still to be seen in Gloucestershire. The manor houses had dovecotes, the birds belonging to which preyed on the farmers' crops; and to this day one often finds rural dovecotes marking where the ancient manor house stood.

There was no other building of any size in the village than the church and the mill. The cultivators of the ground lived in mud huts, and, of course, along with their stock, as some peasants live with their stock in

Germany and in the Saxon part of Holland to-day. The huts were 'fenced al aboute with stikkes.' And these little enclosures for the production of the very few vegetables then grown, or for the airing of the stock, were all that the early farmer had under his complete personal control, for he farmed, as has been stated, as a member of a community.

'The village ground plan, indeed, remains in hundreds of villages to-day,' as Mr R. H. Rew says; 'but the detached, isolated farmhouses are of a later date.'

The land of the manor was composed, first, of cultivated land, and, second, of common and waste.

On the commons and waste the cultivators' cattle might graze. Part of the cultivated land was reserved for the lord of the manor; the rest was rented by the community. Freemen paid rent in military service, produce or money; the men who were not free, and they were by far the more numerous, paid rent in labour or service on the land reserved for the lord. What the higher order of non-free tenants or villeins did for their lord was chiefly team work; the lower grades gave their labour. These serfs might not

leave the manor, even to become soldiers, nor might they marry without their lord's leave.

There seem to have been varying degrees of serfdom. Some men had to give a great deal of labour, and might be called on for all sorts of services. Others had, to a certain extent, emancipated themselves. Before the thirteenth century, a serf had to pay a fine in order that he might inherit his own father's goods. As time went on, the serf came nearer freedom. The duties he owed to his lord were definitely fixed, and his possessions could no longer be taken from him.

So rural was early England that the author of *The English Village Community* expresses the opinion that the villeins, cottars, and serfs made up seventy-nine per cent. of the population of the kingdom. He thinks that of this seventy-nine per cent. some thirty-two per cent. were villeins, thirty-eight per cent. cottars, and nine per cent. serfs. Thorold Rogers asserts that even in the thirteenth century there was some casual labour oscillating between town and country.

The cultivated land of the village community of free men and serfs had no hedges. It consisted of one big field, divided into three

smaller fields by strips of grass, and from seed-time to the end of harvest, fenced against the village cattle. Every year each of the three small fields was under different treatment, the succession being wheat, then spring corn and peas and beans, and then fallow. A man whose share in the land was, say, fifteen acres would have five in the wheat field, five in the other crop field, and five in the fallow.

But his holdings were not compact five-acre plots. In order that each man should have his share of the good and inferior land, the fields were cut up into parallel acres, half or quarter acre strips, divided by narrow strips of grass, and a man's strips were not alongside one another, but were allotted by casting lots at the beginning of the year all over the fields. After harvest, the gates in the fencing round the whole of the cultivated land of the community were opened, and the cattle fed on the stubble and the grass strips. A foreman of the 'field jury' decided when the harvest was over. As long as the last man to carry his corn was kept in countenance by a solitary stook belonging to a neighbour, the cattle could not be turned in.

At this day, by journeying to Laxton or to Eakring, which are both in a part of

Nottinghamshire away from railways—they can only be reached, indeed, by byroads—there may still be seen an example of such open field farming by a parish co-partnership. It is most interesting to look at, but the plain truth about such a system of agriculture has been known for centuries. Hasbach, than whom there is no more sympathetic writer where the rural worker is concerned, puts the matter concisely: 'The cultivator lost much time when his land, instead of lying together in the neighbourhood of his house, was scattered and often far from the village. He had to follow the same system of cultivation as his neighbours, and progress was dependent on common consent. The strips being unfenced, disputes often arose between neighbours. Only if all the cultivators could come to an understanding could extensive improvements be undertaken. Infectious diseases were more liable to spread among the stock on the commons than in private fields, and improvement of breeds was difficult. These reasons are sufficient to show why enclosures were calculated to increase production; and others might be added.'

CHAPTER II

THE SELF-SUPPORTING VILLAGE, AND AFTER

THE outstanding facts about the open field villages are, seemingly, two :—

First, instead of there being, as there are to-day, landowners, tenant farmers, and paid labourers, there were only landowners (the lords of the manors) and the tenant-labourers. Everybody, apparently, had a bit of land, though some men paid for their land by other services than labour in the lord's fields. There were also some cottagers who made their living as hired labourers for the lord, or for freemen, as well as by working on the ground they rented. Such names as 'Tinker's Field,' 'Smithsham,' 'Barber's Furlong,' 'Dog-Whipper Land,' 'Parson's Close,' and 'Sexton's Mead,' testify to the services rendered to the community.

In the second place, the village community was self-supporting. The lord, who paid his servants mostly in kind, got a certain amount of money from his freemen tenants, and by selling stock; but the farming of the community was chiefly a matter of raising corn

and cattle for food. The roads were very bad, and such wants of the community as had to be supplied by traffic over them were very few indeed. Implements and domestic utensils were largely home-made. Linen came not only from flax but from nettles, nettle table-cloths surviving, indeed, till the end of the eighteenth century. As Mr Prothero writes, 'words like spinster, webster, lyster, maltster, brewster, and baxter, show that women spun, wove, and dyed the cloth as well as malted the barley, brewed the ale, and baked the bread for the family.'

As a general rule, agriculture was despised by the great landowners. The authority already quoted says humorously that 'feudal barons are rarely represented as fumbling in the recesses of their armour for samples of corn.' Not so the heads of the monasteries and priories. They were the advanced guard of agricultural progress, and did notable work in bringing wild and undrained land into cultivation.

Poets and writers who know nothing about farming have extolled the agriculture of the primitive community, but it was a method of working the land with innumerable draw-backs, and an agriculture in which plenty

alternated with scarcity. Many a winter there was famine in the land, and man and beast suffered hunger.

As the arm of the law lengthened, and the powers of the manorial courts were encroached upon, as commerce developed and products were increasingly exchanged for money, 'as land-owning became a business and farming a trade, agricultural progress demanded less personal dependence, a freer hand, a larger scope for individual enterprise.' Land passed into fewer hands, and the system of paying wages was developed.

The Black Death helped materially to break up the manorial organisation. That pestilence is said to have carried off nearly half the population of England. When that visitation had passed, there was so much more land than workers that wages rose tremendously, and a Royal Order (1349) sought to restrain what is called 'the proud and covetous desires' of the labourers. For a hundred and fifty years after this, Acts of Parliament were threatening not only with the stocks—'a pair to be in every town,' said the law—but with imprisonment, with branding on the forehead, and with outlawry, those who deserted their masters or the land. Men

and women were to 'abide at the same labour,' and magistrates fixed a standard wage.

By 1377 things had come to a sad pass indeed. 'Villeins and land tenants in villeinage, who owed services and customs to their lords, due as well of their body as of their tenures, and will not suffer any distress or other justice to be made upon them, but do menace the ministers of their lords of life and member, and what more is, gather themselves together in great routs, and agree by such confederacy that every one shall aid to resist their lords.'

In a year or two came the Peasants' Revolt. These peasants would have serfdom abolished, they would have land for fourpence instead of sixpence and tenpence per rod, they would have freedom to buy and sell where they liked and not at their lord's pleasure. These desperate characters not only burnt court rolls, which established their bondage as well as their rights, but had a way of making short work of lawyers.

With such a subversive spirit abroad, it is no wonder that the state of serfdom was soon fast disappearing. Some bondmen got away to the towns, some were freed as a

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meritorious act of death-bed repentance, some went into the service of the Church in lay capacities, some covenanted with their lords with money or money's worth for their freedom. But villeins were still to be found in the land in the time of Elizabeth, and those who are acquainted with the North of England know to how late a period the custom survived of giving 'boon days' to the landlord, and helping to plough his fields and get in his hay, corn, and peats, and even carry his letters.

It is said that a large proportion of the people of England took no part in the Wars of the Roses, but went on with their ordinary work. If it be true, however, that a tenth of the population was destroyed by wounds and disease in the conflict of the time, the changes brought about by the Black Death must have been continued by the thirty years' fighting. Following on the Wars of the Roses, wide economic, social, religious, and political changes carried still further the revolution in rural Britain.

'When once the struggle was ended,' says *English Farming, Past and Present*, 'a new world began to piece itself together. Accepting the coming spirit of the age,

agriculture reorganised itself on a money basis, and two classes emerge in prominence —capitalist tenant-farmers and free but landless labourers.'

CHAPTER III

FROM THE BLACK DEATH TO THE SMITHFIELD CLUB

When hosts of land workers had been killed off by the Black Death and other epidemics, and by the continual wars, when labour had become scarce, and the advent of more modern ideas was extending commercialism to the country, it was natural that sheep-farming should be developed. One man may look after many sheep, and wool was in increasing demand at home and abroad—it was the greatest English export—and it did not take as much harm as corn when transported along deplorable roads. It was 'the chief source of the revenues of the Crown; it supplied the sinews of our wars.' In the days before turnips and the agricultural novelties of the period in which turnips were introduced, a farmer had to change completely from tillage to pasture; 'he could

not, like his successor, combine the two.' 'Manorial lords,' says Hasbach, 'aimed at obtaining the use of larger areas, and therefore at driving out the population settled on their lands. Enclosures and evictions began. Houses, whole villages, were pulled down. Teams and ploughs vanished from the fields, which were left to go down to grass; parts of the waste, and even the common itself, were taken away from the villages, and the area obtained was hedged in and given over to sheep-farming.' The enclosing and grazing movement continued, Mr Prothero tells us, down to the middle of the reign of Elizabeth.

> Commons to close and kepe;
> Poor folk for bred to cry and wepe;
> Towns pulled down to pastur shepe;
> This ys the new gyse!

The 'caterpillars of the commonwealth' joined 'manor to manor, farm to farm, pasture to pasture.' 'Ambicious suttletie brought VI. fearmes to one,'

> Occupyinge a dozen men's lyvingis.

The sheep ate up—

> Our corne, our wood, whole villages and townes.

Men saw the fulfilment of the old prophecy, 'Horne and Thorne shall make Englande forlorne.' Yet it must be admitted, Mr

Prothero writes, that whether land was enclosed for tillage or a sheep run—and it was enclosed for both—its productiveness was increased. 'Open-field farmers commanded little or no manure for their arable lands, and were practically dependent on sheep for fertilising the soil. Yet in winter, animals, reduced to the lowest possible number, barely survived on straw and tree-loppings. The miserable condition of live stock on these open-field farms and commons exposed the sheep to the scab and the rot, and the cattle to the murrain. It was no uncommon spectacle to see the head of an ox impaled on a stake by the highway, as a warning that the township was infected.'

All the land that changed hands did not do so by force and guile, but 'considerations of mutual advantage, equitable bargains, fair purchase, superior force, legal chicanery, threats and bullying, were all at work to hasten the change to the individual occupation of land and the consolidation of separate holdings. If copyholders or commoners appealed to the law courts matters no doubt sometimes ended as they were friended.'

Sir Thomas More's famous plea in his *Utopia* against the enclosures which compelled men to

trudge out of their 'knowen and accustomed howses,' duly produced a Royal Commission. About this time there is general complaint of land passing into the hands of the week-enders of the period, City men who were 'vintners, taylors, and such trifling fellows, so as to keep their summer houses.'

Mr Tawney, who has made such a careful study of rural Britain in the sixteenth century, does not regard the decline which took place in the position of the smaller landed classes 'as an inevitable step in economic progress, similar to the decay of one type of industry before the competition of another'; for if, he says, 'economic causes made a new system of farming profitable, it is none the less true that legal causes decided by whom the profits should be enjoyed.'

Mr Johnson takes the view that the small owner 'suffered in many ways,' that there was injustice, and the results were 'grave'; but that 'the numbers of moderate-sized owners of land were in all probability increased.'

The year 1563 is notable for the Statute of Apprentices, which, according to its preamble, was to advance 'husbandry, and yield unto

the hired person, both in time of scarcity and in time of plenty, a convenient proportion of wages.' Under this law, labourers were to be hired by the year; and in Scotland and the North of England an approximation to this plan is still observed. A twelve-hour day for summer time was enacted; in the winter the farm hands were to work during daylight, as is practically the custom to-day. Wages were to be at the rates of the district, and were to be fixed yearly by the justices, in consultation with 'such grave and discreet persons as they shall think meet.' Boys over twelve and under eighteen could be compelled to apprentice themselves to farm work till the age of twenty-four, and no one might leave his district without a certificate.

Modern masters who suggest that their men are not worth more than they are paid will no doubt be interested in the following rhyme of the period :—

> I can sowe,
> I can mowe,
> And I can stacke,
> And I can doe
> My master too,
> When my master turnes his backe.

A few years later than the Statute of Apprentices, there was legislation which at

least enacted that to each cottage there should be four acres of land.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, farming had made little real progress. Oxen still ploughed as in Saxon times, and farmers needed to have pressed upon them the economy of using iron-rimmed wheels for their wagons instead of all-wood wheels. No new crops but hops had been introduced since the Middle Ages. But an agricultural writer who first made use of the historic phrase that 'the best doung for the ground is the Maister's foot, and the best provender for the house the Maister's eye,' mentions having seen abroad not only 'turnepz' but 'a lowe kinde of carre with a couple of wheeles and the frunt armed with sharpe syckles.'

Eventually our agriculture took advantage of the opportunities of progress offered by the consolidation of holdings. So long as custom held the open-field farmers in its grip a new system of cropping was impossible. As the open fields became single farms, not only turnips but potatoes began to be grown, and improved implements, as well as new crops and new ways of manuring, came into favour. How backward things were is evidenced by the fact that a law had to be

passed to stop farmers plucking the wool from their sheep and hauling ploughs by means of ropes tied to their horses' tails!

The Civil War arrested the progress of agriculture to some extent, but spread a knowledge of the rural practice of different parts of the country. Some agricultural writers during the Commonwealth asked that sufficient common land 'for a cow or two' might be reserved for the poor; but there was folly in rural writing then as now, one reformer urging that elephants would be useful on the land! From Holland came not only roots, grasses, and clover, but assistance in draining the Fens. As the years went by 'a Colledge of Experiments' was proposed, and new methods of sowing as well as new ideas of stock raising. In the seventeenth century the most prosperous counties seem to have been Middlesex, Surrey, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Northamptonshire; the most backward are said to have been Cheshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northumberland, Durham, and Cumberland. But there was a different tale to tell when the development of trade and manufacture in the vicinity of the iron and coal fields and of

water power drew the rural population northwards. Just before the eighteenth century opened, however, when the total population of England and Wales was less than the population of London to-day, the rural population was four millions.

Between 1700 and 1800 agriculture made remarkable progress, of which we have evidence in 'meat eaten by the peasantry, wheaten bread become the bread stuff of half the population.' Great landowners made agriculture profitable. Bolingbroke adorned his farm with painted hay forks and hay-ricks; Lord Townshend ('Turnip Townshend'), Pope wrote,—

> Ploughs, burns, manures, and toils from sun to sun.

But other than aristocrats did their part. 'Insulted, assaulted Bridewell'd Tull' inculcated principles of agriculture which survive to our day. Bakewell showed what the breeder might hope to achieve. In half a century the weight of sheep rose some 53 lbs., and cattle eight times as much. The Smithfield Club was formed, and from the work done by Davy in early agricultural chemistry, the Royal Agricultural Society was led to choose its motto of 'Practice and Science.'

Of the historic labours of Arthur Young, to whose *Annals* George III. was a contributor, and of the remarkable activities of Coke of Norfolk, we may not stay to speak.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAST LABOURERS' REVOLT

But 'the Goths and Vandals of open fields,' in Young's phrase, 'touched the civilisation of enclosures.' 'Only the best and strongest land,' as Mr Prothero says, 'was able to endure the open-fields system without exhaustion.' Without the supersession of the old open-field system by separate occupations, it would have been impossible for England to feed itself, when, in the manufacturing centres, there was a rapidly growing population which did nothing towards the cultivation of the land. 'The agricultural defects of the intermixture of land were overwhelming and ineradicable.' But in carrying out the necessary changes, Mr Prothero has written, 'rural society was convulsed, and its general conditions revolutionised. The divorce of a peasantry from the soil, and the extinction

of commoners, open-field farmers, and eventually of small freeholders, were the heavy price which the nation ultimately paid for the supply of bread and meat to its manufacturing population. The decision was made under an economic pressure which completely overrode the social considerations that should have controlled and modified the process of enclosure. Some of the practical evils of open fields and their attendant pasture commons might have been, with skill, time, and patience, mitigated.'

Mr and Mrs Hammond particularly address themselves to the story of how the system of Parliamentary enclosure was actually carried out. When the enclosures of the eighteenth century began, only half of England was under cultivation, and three-fifths of that was farmed on the common-field system. Within a hundred and fifty years four and a quarter million acres of common fields and a certain area of waste, and one and three-quarter million acres of waste were enclosed.

Arthur Young, as we have seen, was an advocate of enclosure, but he wrote that 'by nineteen out of twenty Enclosure Bills—there were four thousand of them—the poor are injured, and some greatly injured.' 'In

every way, both directly and indirectly,' says Mr Johnson, 'enclosure tended to divorce the poor man from the soil.' 'An increase of human life was obtained,' Dr Slater concludes, 'at the expense of a decrease in its quality.' The old peasant society, it has been said, had a look of confusion and weakness, it had 'pressure outside and bickerings inside,' but it had also 'a basis of independence'; in Professor Hasbach's words, 'a ladder, on the bottom rung of which no one was bound to stay.'

'The commons were the patrimony of the poor,' write the authors of *The Village Labourer*, and 'the commoner's child, however needy, came into a world in which he had a share and a place. The civilisation which was now submerged had spelt a sort of independence for the obscure lineage of the village. It had represented, too, the importance of the interest of the community in its soil, and in this aspect also the robbery of the present was less important than the robbery of the future. The peasant with rights and a status, with a share in the fortunes and government of his village, standing in rags but standing on his feet, makes way for the labourer.'

'All I know,' said one poor man, 'is that I had a cow and an Act of Parliament has taken it from me.' 'I kept four cows before the common was enclosed,' another stated, 'and you ask me what I lose by it!'

Pathetic protests against enclosure were so little heeded in Parliament, and the powers given to the local authorities were so large, that the House of Commons had to be moved to say that no clause should be added to an Enclosure Bill, making an offence capital, without agreement in Committee of the whole House! A letter from George Selwyn shows that a scheme which Lord Bolingbroke had for enclosure meant '£300,000 clear in Bully's pockets.' In summing up their narrative, Mr and Mrs Hammond feel justified in saying that 'no class in the world has so beaten and crouching a history as the English peasantry.' Concerning the position of the landless labourer just before Waterloo, Mr Prothero writes: 'Contemporary writers who comment on the increasing degradation of the labouring classes too often treat as its causes changes which were really its consequences. They note the increase of drunkenness, but forget that the occupation of the labourers' idle moments was gone; they attack the

mischievous practice of giving children tea, but forget that milk was no longer procurable; they condemn the rising generation as incapable for farm labour, but forget that the parents no longer occupied land on which their children could learn to work; they deplore the helplessness of the modern wives of cottagers who had become dependent on the village baker, but forget that they were now obliged to buy flour, and had lost their free fuel; they denounce their improvident marriages, but forget that the motive of thrift was removed.' In one parish three-quarters of the inhabitants were receiving relief!

The settlement laws, which prevented men from seeking their fortunes in other districts, were eventually amended; but when Queen Victoria came to the throne there were only two English counties in which the fatuous 'Speenhamland' system was not in operation. Under this system the justices saw to it that 'poor and industrious men and their families who, to the satisfaction of the justices, shall endeavour as far as they can for their own support and maintenance,' received, not fair wages for their work, but a three-gallon loaf for a man, and a loaf and a half for a woman

and a child. 'The entire labour system' was in 'the meshes of the Poor Law.' The sufferings of the poor from hunger and cold were incredible. One philanthropist urged that they should betake themselves to cowsheds and stables for warmth, so following 'the practice of the Duchy of Milan'; other well-wishers of their species were for allotments, for was it not 'chiefly this practice which renders the state of slavery in the West Indies tolerable'? Some enterprising overseers seem to have harnessed to the parish cart men and women who asked for relief!

The authors of *The Village Labourer* speak of a 'fatal weakness' of the rural worker: 'All the circumstances make the spirit of combination falter in the country. In towns men are face to face with the brutal realities of their lives, unsoftened by any of the assuaging influences of brook and glade and valley. Men and women who work in the fields, breathe something of the resignation and peace of Nature; they bear trouble and wrong with a dangerous patience. That is one reason why the history of the anguish of the English agricultural labourer so rarely breaks into violence.' But in 1830 the last

Labourers' Revolt broke out in thirteen counties.

Though no one was killed and no one was seriously hurt, three of the leaders were hanged, and probably some five hundred men and boys in all were transported with a heartlessness, which, in many corners of rural Britain, is not yet forgotten.

CHAPTER V

AGRICULTURE IN OUR OWN TIMES

We have now reached a period within living memory. Farming prospered during the early Victorian period, as any one can see by the large farm-houses and the expensive rural tombstones of the time. Mr Prothero, and there can be no higher authority, does not hesitate to say that up to the present day there has been little progress from the standard of the highest farming in the fifties. Stock-breeding was reaching a high level, the newly invented drain pipe had been freely employed, roads had been improved, reapers had come into use, railways had entered the farmers' service, and capital

had freely been invested in the land. Best of all, it had dawned on those who had been 'prone to expect that alterations in the Protective duties would turn the balance between the success and failure of their harvest,' that if they wanted aid they must help themselves.

Agriculturists did not begin to learn this lesson too soon, for after prosperity there came depression. After a generation or more of easy living, farmers had to face the problem of how to manage their land profitably with cheap food coming in from abroad. The cheap food could not be kept out because it was a boon to the great centres of population, and was the foreigners' payment for our manufactures. It was cheap because it was raised on cheap virgin soil in favourable climates.

What were those who were working the old expensive land in an uncertain climate to do? Not a few did very little, and went under. Some were largely kept going by generous landlords; many by their own skill, grit, and intelligence. As Mr Prothero says: 'When once landlord and tenant realised that the prospect of a rise in the price of cereals was for years to come remote, and when,

more slowly, they became convinced that Protection of food produce can never be revived on a scale which can really help corn-growers, they set themselves to develop the land on more varied lines.'

Some districts have modified their system of farming to an extraordinary degree; the revolution in the Fens and in Essex are two familiar illustrations. New ideas about manuring, a new attitude towards agricultural science, and improved implements and a great development of commercial facilities have helped tremendously. The high authority who has been so repeatedly quoted finds farmers to-day, 'for the most part alert, receptive of new ideas, keenly sensible of their debt to science, eager to accept its latest suggestion.' Landlords as well as tenants, he thinks, are now 'better equipped to profit by prosperity or to combat misfortune than they have been at any previous period in history.'

Of all the books in the list given in Chapter I., none is likely to be more serviceable to the general reader than Mr Prothero's sane, searching, and enormously painstaking history. The general reader will do well to study it first. When he has read it, he may

well turn to the *Pilgrimage of British Farming*, which has been appearing during the last year or two in the *Times*, and is now being republished. It is the best account of the state of our agriculture at the present day. It is now known that the author was Mr A. D. Hall, late director of our oldest agricultural experimental station, Rothamsted, and at present a Development Commissioner.

One point made by Mr Hall is well worth noting: this is that people who talk about the land have not all the same conception of what a farmer is. This leads to much misunderstanding. One person is 'thinking of the tenants of from 200 to 500 acres; another of men with 30 to 80 acres working for their daily bread; a third, and perhaps the most vocal, of the men who dominate the Farmers' Clubs and Chambers of Agriculture, men who may be owners or tenants, but are primarily business men connected with land, dealers in pedigree stock, valuers and agents, making the main part of their income by other means than sheer cultivation of the soil.'

Mr Hall is in perfect agreement with other good judges that British agriculture is prosperous. For some years there has

been close competition for farms, and rents have been rising. Bad farming is to be found alongside the best farming; but Mr Hall is in no doubt that if 'an examination be made of the methods of a good example of the farming class occupying from 150 to 500 acres, devoted to corn, stock, or milk, 'it would be very hard for the most enlightened and scientific expert to show him how to improve his business. To a man who takes trouble to learn and attend to his business, farming now offers every prospect of a good return on his capital.'

The Hon. Edward Strutt, who is one of the best practical farmers in England, said in his presidential address to the Surveyors' Institution at the close of the year 1912: 'Although the return from capital invested in agriculture is probably lower than that obtainable in any other business undertaking, and the industry and ability of the farmer is always liable to be frustrated by the weather, the time has now arrived when those interested in agriculture should cease saying that it is hopelessly unprofitable, and that it is an industry in which a success is almost impossible without the greatest parsimony in all expenditure.'

Mr Strutt is sure that 'a large proportion of the second-class grass lands of the South and East of England, and perhaps some of the East Midlands, could be reconverted into arable with considerable profit.' The figures he read to the Surveyors' Institution showed that no crop on his several thousand acres paid better than wheat, except potatoes.

As to large farming, Mr Hall says roundly that he does not believe 'that there is any more profitable enterprise open at the present day than would be provided by a 2000 acre farm on good land with an adequate backing of capital.' That is not to say, however, that the ideal farming is as a matter of fact to be found, as a general rule, among those who possess 2000 acres. People who have travelled about rural Britain realise how true is Mr Hall's judgment on many a large farmer:—

> He makes money because he is shrewd, spends little on his ventures, and because the land makes it for him, but often he is wasting a great opportunity. This cheap and slipshod management is perhaps chiefly seen where men were allowed to put farm to farm when things were at their worst twenty years ago; in the arable counties cases are to be found of men in occupation of several thousand acres, often in scattered farms, and this vast acreage

they cultivate almost as cheaply and as scantily as a colonial farmer would—real extensive farming that pays because the expenditure is low enough to leave a margin of profit even with the small returns. These men worked in the spirit of the late Sir John Lawes's dictum, that high farming is no remedy for low prices, and they were useful in keeping the land going somehow; but with better prices and with the openings that have been found for specialised agriculture the need for such prairie farming is past.

Returning to Mr Prothero, we find him declaring 'that thousands of acres of tillage and grass lands are comparatively wasted, underfarmed, and under-manured. Countries whose climate is severer than our own land and in which poorer soils are cultivated, produce far more from the land than ourselves. The gross receipts per cultivated acre in Great Britain has been calculated at only one-fifth of those of Belgium and two-thirds of those of Denmark.'

English Rural ife Land Farming. By R. H. Rew. Farmers' Club. 1913.
Land Problems and National Welfare. By Christopher Turnor. Lane. 1912.
Fortunes for Farmers. By Bernard Gilbert. Fifield. 1913.

II. TERRA INCOGNITA

CHAPTER VI

THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY

After what are called the fine arts and the liberal professions, there is perhaps no trade which requires so great a variety of knowledge and experience [as farming.]—ADAM SMITH.

THE worst of coming up to town now and then, if you are of the Rural Forward Movement, is that your London friends are so concerned at the political impoverishment of the wilds from which you have emerged that they offer to come down to speak. Now, even before the friendliest audience, it is not agreeable to be sponsor for a stranger to the locality who, with many unfamiliar allusions, fiercely urges the claims of his puzzled hearers to small holdings for market gardening—on heavy clay. Sometimes the well-intentioned orator tries his hand at local colour, and then we may have partridges confounded with pheasants, and hear of foot-and-mouth disease of horses, or anything! It is not only the political novices

who are so trying. I have heard a Parliamentary candidate, who has fought two elections in a rural constituency, tell an audience of farmers, who had most of them been got together with difficulty, that he did not know mangels from turnips.

The progress of week-ending and the increase of motor-cars have spread some elementary knowledge of rural conditions among townspeople. They have learnt that the labourer's mind is not always full of small holdings, that every squire is not an oaf, and that all parsons are not tyrants. But the things which are generally received among them are marvellous.

They give us to understand that our farming is a thing for Colonial mirth and the scorn of the Continent.

Where we produce corn we are urged to make butter, or to grow fruit and asparagus.

On Science they are tremendous. Have not certain manuring and breeding experiments shown how the yield can be enormously increased, while if it is electrified or planted out grain by grain with a dibber, as the Chinese do——

But co-operation is their stand-by, their Mesopotamia, and after that Denmark.

Now the practical man is getting rather tired of hearing about the agriculture of foreign countries.

For one thing, the articles written for him are mostly the work of people who are little more than tourists. They see only the best things, and superficially at that, and they have no means of checking what is told them. Even if they receive accurate information, it is the easiest matter to misunderstand it, or to give it a wider application than the informant intended.

Further, a great deal of what has been written about foreign farming has been the work of people who, however honest and well-intentioned, have not known the agriculture of their own country well enough to appreciate its good points. Therefore they have unduly exalted the skill and success of the foreigner at the expense of their countrymen.

The truth is that the advantage which the agriculturists of one country can obtain by studying the agriculture of another country is, as often as not, wrongly stated.

The cases are few in which what is done in one country can be exactly duplicated in another. The conditions are usually

very different. Take Holland and Denmark. More has been written in explanation and in praise of their agriculture than of any other farming. But when one comes to grips on the spot with the details of rural developments in the Netherlands and in Denmark nothing impresses one more forcibly than that Dutch farming and Danish farming are, above all things, the products of conditions existing in Holland and in Denmark.

There are imperfectly informed politicians who lament the fact that we should be importing so much butter, cheese, and bacon. If they are of one party they talk tariffs. If they are of another their theme is usually co-operation. 'See,' they say, 'how the Dutch farmers produce butter and cheese, and make any amount of money through their co-operative creameries! See how the Danish farmers prosper by reason of their many co-operative bacon factories!' The fact is, of course, that as long as there is the tremendous demand for milk which exists in London and our great cities, a demand which is daily increasing—milk now reaches the Metropolis from as far away as Somerset and Derbyshire, and we import Irish cream; as long, also, as there is the excellent market

which exists for fresh pork, our farmers, except in specially favourable circumstances —let us hope that the Hitchin and Bury St Edmunds ventures are made in favourable circumstances—are not likely to turn their milk into butter, or to undertake personal responsibility for bacon factories.

Irish and Danish bacon is, in the best qualities, an exceedingly good article which will not be easily bettered here at the price, for the Irish and the Danes have some natural advantages in producing it. If bacon factories on the Danish model necessarily mean money to all farmers, why are there no co-operative bacon factories in Holland? There is not a single one. There is an enormous production of pigs in Holland, but they are sent abroad as pork.

Surely it is a self-evident proposition that the agriculture of every country is rooted in the physical and economic conditions of that country?

Why does Holland supply the world with so large a proportion of its bulbs? Chiefly because, when the sand-dunes are dug from off the top of the peat-deposits, what is laid bare is the very soil for bulbs. That is, when there is mixed with it barge-loads of

that cow-manure which is so abundantly produced in a cow-keeping country.

As to the Dutch shrubs which go to the United States, and come to us also in such quantities, they are a great culture in Holland, because in the artificial, water-permeated soil of the Dutch nurseries there are perfect facilities for the production of those well-balled roots which it is essential that shrubs shall possess if they are to travel well and grow well afterwards.

Why are so many square miles of Holland devoted to cow-keeping when other land in that country is making such a lot of money under close cultivation? Because in these tracts of luscious meadow it is impossible as yet to get the water-level low enough for crops to thrive.

Again, why does every country in Europe, except Norway, grow sugar-beet, while England, which consumes more sugar per head of her population than any other country in the world—four-fifths of this sugar being beet-sugar—is only at the stage of running her first beet-sugar factory? For two reasons. First, because sugar-beet fills a place in the agriculture of Continental Europe which is not quite vacant in England, where mangels

and turnips have long been heavy and exceedingly well-managed crops. In the second place, because, owing to our fiscal policy, we can buy our sugar cheaply.

Right away in the south of Holland there is a large district which produces cherries. Why? Because that part of the country has almost the same geological formation as the cherry district of England. Indeed, the two cherry-growing areas resemble one another to quite a comical degree. In the country lanes and cherry orchards of Limburg I could obtain photographs which would be mistaken for photographs from Kent.

Why are Holland and Denmark making a living by agriculture? Because Holland has no iron worth much and only some inconveniently placed coal, and Denmark has no iron or coal at all.

The agriculturists of one country can pick up many useful ideas from the agriculturists of another, but all the ideas they obtain have to be adapted to local conditions. When we grew our experimental sugar beet crop in England in Essex we imported beet-lifting forks of the kind used in Holland. But though they were admirable in the Dutch loam, they bent in all

directions in our heavy Essex clay, and we had to have a stronger sort made on the Dutch model by an English manufacturer.

It is easy to find illustrations of the danger of praising the agriculture of one country to the disadvantage of the agriculture of another. Take, for example, the difference between agricultural conditions in the Highlands and the Alps. To the townsman tourist who does not stop to think, it seems inexplicable that the prosperity of the Swiss farmer should not be reproduced on the hills of Scotland. So we have such a half-truth as appears on the cover of a recent brochure. A stretch of wild mountain-moor is shown, the idea being evidently to suggest some such thought as: 'Here should be the home of a nation of prosperous small holders.' The fact is that the scanty population on the mountains of the Highlands is due not only to the sad economic causes with which we are familiar, but to geographical causes. The group of communities, of which that in the Val d'Anniviers is a type,

was always more stable [than that of the Scottish Highlands] (says Dr Newbigin in *Man and his Conquest of Nature*), because more favoured by Nature. In the more powerful sunshine the Annivards have an advantage which more than counter-

balances the effect of elevation as compared with Scotland.

The climate of Highland Scotland is damp, and the moisture comes especially in the height of summer, when it is little needed, and may be insufficient in spring, when it is most wanted. Further, the clouds hide the sun and prevent the soil from obtaining sufficient warmth. The latitude also makes the climate colder.

In the Val d'Anniviers the rainfall is low and the sun is hot. The insufficient rainfall would be a great disadvantage if there was not, in the glaciers, an enormous store of water which can be used most easily at the time of greatest need. The faster the ice melts the bigger load of water it pours into the stream. The Annivard is favoured, as compared with the Highlander, not only by the climate, but by the fact that the last glaciers of the Ice Age still linger on his mountains, though they have long since melted from the Scottish hills. The more favourable natural conditions are reflected in the greater stability of the social polity, which has proved more resistant than that of the Highlander.

Those who have given some study to the development of agricultural science, those who know most of the agriculture of the Continent, are fully conscious of the possibilities of improvement in English farming. Our crop averages, high as they are, might be raised; more stock might be kept; higher milk yields might be obtained; a great deal of land might be turned to better account. But it is in human nature to resent the epithets and patronage of those whose talk

on rural problems is, to speak plainly—and the time has come for plain speaking—cheap, uninformed, and opinionated.

As to science, it is five or six years ago since Mr A. D. Hall wrote from Rothamsted itself that 'it must not be supposed that science is yet in a position to reform the procedure of farming, or even to effect an immediate increase in the productivity of the land; agriculture is the oldest and most widespread art the world has known; the application of scientific methods to it is very much an affair of the day before yesterday. Nor can we see our way to any radical acceleration of the turnover of agricultural operations that shall be economical. . . . Even the best farming practice is still a step beyond its complete explanation by science.' It is sixteen years ago, also, since a tenant farmer declared in his *Elements of Farming*, that any one of half a dozen things, from excessive wet or drought to dilapidated buildings, would 'each of them do as much harm to a farmer as complete ignorance of scientific knowledge.'

Foreigners know, if some of our critics of rural life and industry do not, what stage our agriculture has reached. As an agricultural journal recently asked, 'Is our

agriculture profitable, or are farmers in other countries making more money?' That is the real test. Or to quote Mr Hall: 'America and the Colonies, so often quoted as examples of modern farming, have nothing to teach us, and the lesson of the highly-farmed Continental countries—Holland, Belgium, Denmark—is not the transplantation of this or that industry, but that intelligence will find various openings for profit.'

The Soil. By A. D. HALL. Murray.

CHAPTER VII

THE ELEMENTARY FACTS ABOUT THE LABOURER

Laws should be adapted to those who have the heaviest stake in the country; for whom misgovernment means not mortified pride or stinted luxury, but want and pain and degradation.—LORD ACTON.

ALTHOUGH the men employed by the British farmer are probably better off, *as a class*, than is often supposed, there can be no question whatever that their wages and their opportunities should both be improved.

Not only the cost of every household's

supplies, but the standard of decent living has risen. Therefore wages must be raised further. Because the opportunities of the rural worker have not kept pace with the progress which has caused cities to be better known to him than his fathers knew their own shires, those opportunities must be bettered.

But it seems sometimes to be forgotten that, however vigorous and however happy our villages may become, there will always be young men in them with a wholesome desire to take themselves off into the outer world. He is a parish pump Imperialist indeed who has no faith in the great ends which are being accomplished by the flow of British blood into the Britains oversea. As long as we are a manufacturing and a commercial as well as an agricultural nation, our cities, too, however 'Garden'-ified they may become, must continue to draw strength and stamina from the villages.

Of the thousands of men and women who have left the countryside, and the other thousands who are leaving it during the present year, there are very many, nevertheless, who ought to have been able to stay where they were. Whatever machinery

may have still to effect in the working of the land, there can be no great development with less labour in the villages than there is now.

Back to the Land! A few men who have not found that they were better off as tram-conductors, builders' labourers, or carmen have returned to ask the farmers to take them on again, and they have done so. A few tradesmen who, after the give-and-take of the work of the land, did not relish being ordered about in town, or who have had a petty legacy, or have accumulated some small savings, have come back to their villages to be handy men, and often, alas, jobbers in cottage property. A few townees have struggled grimly with the facts of small culture, and, in some cases, when capitalised, experienced in some way or other, and helped by co-operation, have had a measure of success.

But this is no Back-to-the-Land-ing that is going to 'colonise rural England.' The problem of the colonisation of rural England is the problem of keeping there some of the people now in it, and of rearing to healthy, intelligent, self-respecting manhood and womanhood those who are yet to be born there.

If access to the land is not what it should be—this is obviously capable of dispassionate proof—that access must be given. There are plenty of districts in which every man who has a sporting chance of turning land to account can now obtain it. There are some districts, undoubtedly, where he cannot get it, where the attitude of landowners towards those who seek land for any purpose whatever, is preposterous and unforgivable. At the same time, practical experience on a County Council Small Holdings Committee would prevent the acceptance as gospel truth of everything that is written as to the recalcitrancy of landlords and authorities in the matter of providing land.

There are places where the way of the landless to the land is barred in a discreditable manner. But some of those who talk on this subject do not seem to realise how many parishes there are in England in which it is possible to point, not to one, but to several agriculturists in a considerable way of business who started life as labourers, and have risen with no public help whatever. In the first parish that comes to my mind, a parish containing not more than 200 inhabitants, counting women and children, there

are two farmers who were once labourers. And the district is not a small holdings district. Neither is it a grass one. In Scotland the chance of rising is much greater. I lately heard an agriculturist from a Scots county say that every fourth farmer there on a holding of less than 50 acres had been a labourer. Some people are finding that when the same industry, the same self-denial, and the same ability are put into the work of the land in England, as are customarily brought to bear on Colonial land, there are openings at home not inferior, in many respects, to what are offered in the Dominions. That the man who would get on can rise as quickly at home no one believes. An ordinary enough villager, who went to Canada seven years ago, from a village I know, has just returned for a holiday trip, and will take back *nineteen* of his relations. The fact speaks for itself. This must be remembered, however, that the land we have to till here is not virgin land that can be robbed.

The worker, as long as he stays in the village, has, in most cases, more room than he can afford when he moves to town, and he has it for a quarter of the money he would have to pay in town. Also, as long as he works

all day in the open air and has a cottage standing by itself, it is not necessary that his dwelling should be subject to some of the rules of hygienic housing which are imperative in the case of a town lodging. Although too little has been heard, perhaps, of villages where no complaint can be made about the housing, the cottage problem is none the less a real and urgent one in very many villages indeed, and the evils that result from bad cottages and from an insufficient supply of cottages are grievous. Better homes than the average, and very many more of them, are certainly necessary.

But a higher wage, a better cottage, and access to the land will not alone put the rural worker where he should be. How necessary it is, for example, that there should be, along with the giving of these good things, a campaign to teach the labourers of middle and southern England, particularly, a more hygienic and more thrifty way of living.

But it is moral as well as material improvement which has to be wrought in the villages. We are faced by a problem not only of the body but of the soul. The visitor to Denmark sees the workers there 'more independent,' 'at a higher stage of civilisation.'

The bringing about of this measure of social improvement he attributes to better pay, to better living, and to better opportunities. But the opportunities have been moral and mental as well as material. The statesman has played his part—for centuries—in making rural Denmark what it is; but the schoolmaster and the moralist have done and are doing their part also.

In many districts of rural England—the situation in Scotland and Wales is better than it is in England—the schoolmaster has only made a beginning. As to the clergy, many parsons have done virtuously; but when the question of the disestablishment of the Church of England comes to the front again, more will be heard, perhaps, than members of that Church are reckoning on of what some of the clergy have left undone in their churches and in their schools. It is impossible, without blushing for our educational system, to step out of some Scottish, Welsh, or Danish rural schools into the corresponding schools of England.

It has been written over and over again that the best blood of rural England has been drawn out of it into the towns and the Colonies. But there is no real grip of the

fact that this is true morally as well as physically. Vizetelly was prosecuted for publishing *La Terre*; Thomas Hardy in the maturity of his powers was driven from fiction when England had most need of him to tell the naked truth about vital things in our rural life. Only now and then, it may be, in a page of, say, Eden Phillpotts or James Blyth, the student of the countryside whose mind is open has a glimpse of reality. No truth gets into the mind of the sentimental week-ender; and what can the reader of the type of country sketch or 'idyll,' which finds a place in most newspapers and magazines, know of them?

How the Labourer Lives. By SEEBOHM ROWNTREE. Nelson. 1913.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOUR MR GILES

As the Agricultural Organisation Society has now something like the status of a Government Department, we shall be able to see before long quite plainly what co-operation can do for English farming.

We are all agricultural co-operators now, and one of the attractions of the agricultural co-operative faith is that its adherents are allowed much liberty of prophesying. What some amiable talkers who round off their rural speeches with a tribute to the co-operative idea conceive it to be in practice is doubtful. The way in which a King Charles's head of co-operation at its vaguest dominates some improving literature and speechifying directed at Mr Giles makes that worthy man at times a trifle more curt to his betters than his wife would like him to be!

In the most agriculturally co-operated of Continental countries I have made my profession of faith in agricultural co-operation. I have also doffed my hat in Ireland. And I should not like to say how many times I have called attention to what the A.O.S. has done in a few years, or how often I have exhibited the good work of that remarkable agricultural organisation, the Eastern Counties, down at Ipswich.

But when account has been taken of the revolution wrought by Sir Horace Plunkett in Ireland—and of the changes that he will certainly effect in the future—and of all the absolutely necessary work that agricultural

co-operation has done, is doing, and will do, on a considerable scale, for small holders in England and Wales, and for people of larger acreages, there is a possibility, perhaps, of mis-stating a little what it is likely to be able to accomplish within the immediate future for the substantial class which is personified in the phrase, the English farmer.

The first reason is that he is already organised in a very large number of societies which like to stand on their own feet. Some of the organisations which are most valuable to the English farmer are not affiliated to the A.O.S. But there is no saying what may not be seen in the future. The A.O.S. has already branches which do something in providing stallions and in testing for tuberculosis. There are obvious possibilities of extension in this direction. Some genuinely co-operative work, such as in recording milk yields, is being carried on outside the A.O.S. But nothing like all that might be done in this field is being done.

The second reason is that large farmers who are able to pay cash are now in a position to obtain competitive terms from makers of manures, feeding stuffs, and machinery. If they do not always do so, that is their own

look out. But all farmers are not large farmers, and certainly all farmers do not pay cash. Agricultural co-operation not only gives the small farmer the advantages open to the large farmer, but it teaches all farmers that in trying to trade at the middleman's expense they are too clever by half. Those who know the rural districts best will realise how much there is to do in this direction.

Much agricultural co-operative talk is denunciation of the middleman. There would not be that talk if the middleman had not done a good deal to deserve it. But when agricultural co-operation gets down from the platform into the committee meeting of its newly formed local society, it is an anxious sending round of the hat among the farmers to get together a large enough salary to induce one of their enemies' sons to enter their service instead of going into business on his own account! A most judicious and praiseworthy step this is, of course, to socialise the middleman in such a fashion. And, when one thinks of the way in which the smaller farmers, particularly, have been and are being overreached by some middlemen, one cannot but wish more power to these Socialistic tendencies among Conservative squires and their

tenant farmers! But like all other Socialists, when they get out of the study or away from the platform into the office, the co-operators find that the sinful middleman possessed something in trade experience, business aptitude, and personal industry and character, which was rather creditable to him, and is certainly not to be commanded in a hurry by those who would take his place. If his valuable qualities are to be the possession of a co-operative organisation, they have to be paid for at market rates, and some co-operators have not quite grasped that yet.

One of the good things that agricultural co-operation has done is to drive into the head of the farmer the fact that this is an age of specialisation, that farming is one thing and selling and buying on what are increasingly world markets, is another. Agricultural co-operation shows how the farmer can concentrate more on his farming, and employ experts to do some, at least, of his business.

As to the progress of the movement, it is more impressive to say that agricultural co-operation in England and in Wales numbers nearly 500 societies than to give figures which disclose the fact that most of these societies are rather small organisations. The big

Ipswich society is agricultural co-operation at its most effective among farmers of some standing, though not a few of its adherents are small men; and the extent to which it can be duplicated elsewhere among agriculturists with healthy-looking accounts at the bank is just one of the interesting things the next few years have to show us. This kind of co-operation is feeling its way; in milk and fruit indeed is driving along very nicely. We do not know quite what is going to come of it all, for farming has taken a different development in England and Scotland than in the small holdings countries, albeit there are four thousand more small holders in this country now than there were five years ago. Co-operation makes progress in Scotland, but it is a little puzzling that its progress there should be no faster. Inspired by the position of industrial co-operation, with its wholesale society in possession of all sorts of mills, factories, and interests, there are dreams of Anglo-Scots-Irish inter-trading between producers and consumers, which have already become realities to the extent of sales to the value of more than £118,000 in the year.

In England, out of 470 agricultural co-operative societies, 190 are small holdings

and allotments societies, 46 agricultural credit societies, and two dozen egg and poultry societies. But 28 are dairy and cheese societies, and 170 are organisations for the supply of requirements and the sale of produce. There is also a national agricultural bank and national insurance society. The Eastern Counties Association at Ipswich has a turnover of £278,000—on a called-up capital of about £2000—and the Southern Farmers' Society of about half that amount. There is a society in Wales with a turnover of £88,000, and another in the Midlands which does business to the amount of £46,000. Co-operative dairy societies deal with about 53,000 gallons of milk daily. Two bacon factories have been started; pig rings have been broken, and arrangements have been made for the disposal of wool and hops. Further, there are a score of organisers.

Undoubtedly the movement has saved very considerable sums to farmers and has also benefited them by providing them with seeds, manures, etc., of unquestionable quality, and also, in not a few directions, at the Pershore fruit auction, for instance, with better markets.

Agricultural co-operation draws continual

inspiration from the development of the industrial co-operative movement. The members of town co-operative stores now exceed two millions, and in ten years the membership, capital, and sales of the societies have risen fifty per cent. The great Co-operative Wholesale Society sells goods to the value of close on £28,000,000 in the year, and handles in its bank £136,000,000. What is of particular significance to agricultural co-operators, it disposes of £6,000,000 worth of butter, bacon, and hams, its imports from Denmark alone amounting to £3,600,000. It has even steamers of its own. If it be possible for the agricultural movement, as it grows and develops, to come into more intimate contact with industrial co-operation, there may be results of great importance.

When one remembers the extraordinary success of agricultural co-operation in Holland alone: that the Dutch farmer has a dozen co-operative auction marts, that two-thirds of all the Dutch butter made is a co-operative product, that the central bureau at Lonneker does nearly half the country's trade in artificials, it is not difficult to dream dreams of agricultural co-operative possibilities in our own country. How about artificials, for

instance? Why should not co-operators be manufacturers? Now that every trade is so highly developed, it is very difficult, no doubt, for outsiders to make headway, and the question of paying adequate salaries for managers of experience is a rock on which it is easy to split. But in time it ought to be possible to do things which seem almost impossible at present, to develop not only the co-operative sale of produce but manufacturing and importing.

And surely the time must come when our farmers will realise that the state of financial dependence on corn, seed and cake merchants, auctioneers and dealers, in which so many of them live, is out of date, and that what is feasible should be done as to mutual credit banks, in the formation and maintenance of which Continental farmers have distinguished themselves. As farmers in general keep no proper books, it can hardly be wondered at that joint-stock bank managers draw a hard and fast line. Neighbouring farmers dealing with one another are in a different position, however, for they have a pretty shrewd notion of what their friends are really worth, and are in no doubt as to their business methods.

Two things warm the heart of the student of rural sociology to agricultural co-operation. In the first place, the movement has escaped the party political curse which lies heavily on so much rural therapeutics—Conservatives like Mr Yerburgh and Mr Bathurst, and Liberals like Lord Lucas and Lord Shaftesbury have worked together on the A.O.S. Executive. It was Mr Yerburgh, indeed, who once said that in agricultural co-operation he meant to avoid 'Protection and politics.'

In the second place, there is in its propaganda something above and beyond the prospect of coppers saved on superphosphate and a trifle more per score coming in from pigs. Co-operation stands for a greater all-round efficiency in farming, and therefore of the countryside generally; and, what is best of all, it cherishes a fine ideal of a fuller and freer life for rural Britain.

But over and over again I was told in Denmark, and in Holland also, that the true order of rural progress was, first, land tenure; second, education; and third, co-operation. First, land on which to stand erect; then mental and moral improvement; and enlightened farming methods need only to be explained in order to be followed. Fixity

of tenure, practical rather than theoretical, is vital to the progress of our agriculture; that we have almost got. Next comes education; that we have not yet obtained.

Agricultural Co-operation. By E. A. PRATT. Murray. 1908.

Agricultural Organisation. By E. A. PRATT King and Son. 1918.

A Suggested Solution of the Rural Problem. By Sir HORACE PLUNKETT. 'Irish Homestead.' 1913.

The Rural Community. By G. W. RUSSELL. 'Irish Homestead.' 1913.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

THE English village school, like the insanitary cottage, often manages to give a pleasing impression to the stranger by working on his feelings with creepers and a tiled roof. As it also contrives to occupy an agreeable place in fiction, suspicions as to its efficiency, which the public might naturally entertain, are often lulled.

In actual fact, the village school may be a quite remarkably inconvenient erection, with its windows mostly to the north. It may be staffed—I have one in my mind which

is so staffed—by a half-trained, poorly-paid, spiritless, headachy teacher, with the assistance of the wheelwright's crippled niece.

The school into which we have looked is a 'Church school,' and, to all intents and purposes, whatever may be written in Acts of Parliament, is run by a parson who has never in his life, probably, opened a book on education. There are, it is true, the 'managers' —that is, the parson and five farmers of varying degrees of crustiness and illiteracy. One is the representative of the parish council (and a churchwarden), and another is the 'county manager' (the one Dissenter of the company); but they are in a minority as against four 'foundation managers,' and in any case they would not dream of 'going against "the Reverend."'

Although there are not three dozen children in the school, there are too many for the teaching staff, because the scholars are of all ages. The schoolmistress and her helper, even if they were efficient, could not cope with them; and, what with the solitariness of the pair, what with the small success of an honest effort to control and interest troublesome charges, what with the bothering suggestions and requisitions of a changing

inspectorate and of the education committee at the county town, and a deluge of forms to be filled up, educational progress at this centre of educational effort is left without much attention from anybody. The depressed teacher is looking forward, not to a better school, for she could hardly hope to get one, but to a rather gray future with a taciturn naval pensioner.

Time was when the parson that is gone good-naturedly walloped with his riding-whip the bigger lads who were too much for the schoolmistress, and his warm-hearted and masterful wife bustled into the school periodically, equipped with holland sleeves and a small-tooth comb, and sent home children whose mothers had too obviously failed in their duties. But no 'irregularities' of just that sort could now occur; whatever the school may fail in, it labours dully to abide by the 'regulations' of the educational powers that, a little mysteriously, have come to be in authority over it.

All village schools are not like this. Just as there are schoolmistresses and schoolmasters well fitted for their work in life, who labour year in and year out with spirit and self-abnegation, magnify their office,

and contrive courageously to keep in touch with the spirit of progress, there are parsons and local benefactors to whom village schools owe a debt as substantial as it is largely unrecognised. There are also plenty of village schools which structurally fall little short of what they should be. But too many of the scattered schools of rural England are make-believes, paying only a lip-service to the educational ideal, and deluding the nation into the belief that it has been enough to decree Free Education without planning out its adaptation to the needs of those for whom it is provided.

The best thing that could happen to many village schools would be for them to be burnt down! Failing fire, some of them might perhaps have more windows cut into their walls towards the sun, and be turned into labourers' cottages. One large central modern school, to be equipped with a capable staff, might be built for the needs of half a dozen tiny parishes, and the children from a certain distance might be taken along defined routes by means of a service of tarpaulin-covered wagons or wagonettes, as is done in agricultural countries where they take education seriously. Or the small

children might be retained at the village schools—new ones might be built on the open-air principle—and the older children might be drafted to a central school.

But the present system is indefensible. And it is as costly as it is out of date.

Indeed, the most hopeful way of getting another kind of village school may be to show what bad business the present system is. It is easy enough to do that. These inefficient little schools are undoubtedly expensive. There are hundreds of schools with only 20 or 30 scholars, and the cost per head must be £4 or £5 or more. There are about 2500 village schools in England with not more than 40 scholars on their books. There are quite other 3000 with between 40 and 60 scholars. In one county the cost of education in schools of less than 50 scholars is £3 13s. a child, but in schools of more than 150 scholars only £2 5s.

In the villages, as out of them, much needless bitterness has been imported into the discussion of the essentially practical education question, owing to a general misconception of the facts as to the way in which the rural schools are financed. To the generality of people, a village school is a 'Church

school,' which was built by a Churchman, employs teachers who are also members of the Church, and is controlled, naturally enough, by the parson, with the advice of managers, consisting, with one exception, of Church people. A proposal that there should be a larger measure of public control over such a school looks like tyranny.

The truth is, surely, that, since 1902, the entire expense of the school, as distinct from the school-house, has been borne by the county rates, aided by Government grants. The owners of the building provide and maintain it, and in return are allowed facilities for the promotion of a particular ideal of religious faith. The case of those who sincerely object to this arrangement is not an objection to a religious faith, but an objection to ecclesiastical control. Except for certain definite restrictions and directions of the Board of Education and the county education authority—and the existence of the minority managers—the owners retain in their hands the appointment and dismissal of teachers and caretakers, and have the power—no one but a fanatic would say that they invariably exercise it—to make of a public institution an appanage in some sort of the Church.

The burden on the rates for rural elementary schools under County Councils in England is more than three millions a year, and on the National Exchequer (through its contributions to the rates) an additional £4,000,000. There are more than twice as many voluntary schools as Council schools, but the attendance at the two is not in the same proportion. About a million children are taught at the voluntary schools and some 860,000 at the Council schools. Of the total attendance, of about 1,900,000 children, the number over ten who might be usefully drafted into large schools must be not far short of half a million.

It is significant that of the 64,293 teachers in the schools of all classes, less than half are certificated. The uncertificated number 21,737, the supplementary 10,518, and the 'student teachers' 746. The supplementary teacher was once defined as a person of eighteen or upwards who had been vaccinated! It is not now even imperative that a supplementary should be vaccinated. Not a quarter of the 64,293 teachers are men. In most rural elementary schools the upper standards hardly exist.

The elder scholars ought to be gathered

into separate classes elsewhere, under suitably certificated teachers. In a group of half a dozen to a dozen village schools there should be, for these elder scholars at least, one upper standard school at the efficiency level of a good town school. There might even be, here and there, a school—possibly some little endowed grammar school, overhauled and given a rural bias—to which likely material for the farm school or farm institute might have the chance of going.

There is a great deal to be said for Government help towards rural secondary education taking the form of well-considered grants for buildings. The lack of imagination which dulls public effort in the rural districts makes it difficult to initiate anything which involves, as a first step, the spending of a large sum of money. On the other hand, if a building is provided, it is not difficult to find the money to run it. There is a helpful illustration in our experience of the Carnegie libraries, now often liberally supported by ratepayers who would not have found a penny for a library before the idea was visualised by Mr Carnegie's bricks and mortar.

CHAPTER X

THE CASE OF THE CLERGY

To return to the Church. No unprejudiced resident in the country will countenance unjust dealing with the Church, the adherents of which have made many sacrifices for the provision of schools in which the village child shall be educated under the influence of the village church. I was in a village the other day where the landowner had had 'my school'—the phrase is Matthew Arnold's—built by Sir Gilbert Scott. But this public-spirited landowner was very willing to hand over the school completely to the Council, and there must be many foundation managers with an equally liberal conception of education. No doubt, however, there are cases not a few in which the government of the school is less enlightened than even the trust deed permits; and no impartial person whose investigations in rural sociology take him to that illuminating species of country literature, the parish magazines, is likely to say that the intellectual outlook which marks some

of these publications is that which it is desirable to have reflected in the ideals of the rural schools!

In the Dutch language there is a word signifying 'desire of knowledge.' When we have *weetgierigheid* in more of our English villages we may expect to see a corresponding moral and material advance in the countryside. The rural reformers who are taking the field on behalf of higher wages for the labourer need also to enlist with enthusiasm under Lord Haldane's and Mr Pease's educational banner, for it is significant that, generally speaking, rural wages are highest in the United Kingdom where rural education is most efficient. Contrariwise, as might be expected, rural labour is most efficient in the best educated districts.

As to agricultural education, during the last few years a great advance has been made. The last Report of the Board of Agriculture is most stimulating reading. But it would have been more stimulating still had the informed reader not been conscious of the fact that the edifice of agricultural education has been mainly built from the top downwards, instead of from the bottom up.

An opinion to which many sincere students

of the rural problem must reluctantly come is, that one of the reasons why the position of the labourer and the social outlook generally, in many districts, is no better than it is to-day is, first, that some of the members of the only class in the country which is paid to seek and speak the truth have lamentably failed to do so; and, second, that some of the clergy have neglected to hold up before the countryside generally a sufficiently high ideal of enlightenment and citizenship.

The fact is that the Church, when all its good work has been taken account of, has failed to be as careful as it might have been to make the standard of admission to its high profession high enough. If that statement were disputed, reference might again be made to the files of some of the Church magazines of the country. Will you not find in some of these an exhibition of intellectual poverty, of coldness and of condescension which fairly reflect the lack of grip that some of the clergy have of modern conditions?

One who has written books is not likely to overestimate the value of books. But the bareness of some rural clerical libraries, in respect of a certain class of books,

plainly illustrates the degree to which their owners' eyes are shut to fresh light on economic and social problems with which the countryside is vitally concerned. Men can be spiritually minded without books, but when a rector says, as a rural rector lately said to me, that he hardly ever read a book, that man is, surely, presuming on his position as the life-holder of a salaried public office.

Heaven knows with how little of what Cardinal Newman called 'human applause,' and for what small sums, many devoted rural clergy are content to labour. It is often said that you cannot expect much for such small stipends. But may not too much be made of the plea of low stipends? Is there not an aspect from which the small monetary gain of so many rural clergy from their labours may be regarded as a source of strength? Is it not the case that, in all ages and in all climes, the countryman has associated with poverty the preacher and teacher of eternal truth? Is it not the case that to the poor the Gospel is a Gospel of a band of poor men?

There is a Scots proverb which says, 'Better be the head of the commonalty than the tail of the gentry.' It might be better

for the agricultural labourer if some of the clergy realised that a nobler place for them might be at the head of the commonalty, if some of them understood that their true rôle is that of a spiritual, not a social gentry. As it is, many parsons stand for a certain ordering of social life, in the permanence of which few instructed and broad-minded men believe. There can be no permanence in a system which, as one of its results, in a churchyard known to me, has provided for the burying of farmers on the sunny south side of the church, and of labourers on the dreary north side!

The old labourer who acquiesced sullenly, bitterly or fatalistically, but still acquiesced, in that ordering of things, is himself going to the churchyard. He could not read or write, and he had his faults. But he was kindly and he knew his work. His place is being taken by a less-than-half-educated man, whose suspicions of the ill-treatment to which his class has been subjected, by masters, by the mediæval lord of the manor, by enclosures, by short-sighted Parliaments, by the Poor Law, by parsons, are yearly confirmed by much of what comes to him as knowledge through the channels of the cheap

newspaper, cheap books, more frequent public meetings, bicycles, excursion trains, the gramophone, and, at the next town, the kinema and lurid melodrama. The old man was more or less successfully fooled. The young men cannot be fooled so easily.

Said an old labourer's wife to me: 'The country is better than the town to live in, sir, for sartin'; but can ye tell me, sir, can ye honestly tell me, sir, that a lad or a maid has the chance in the country of bettering theirselves, all ways, that they can have, if they have a mind, in the towns?' When the time comes that the rural clergy are able to answer that question with an honest 'Yes' it will be because more of the rural clergy have done what there is to be done, in so many obvious directions, towards improving the lot of the most deserving of our fellow-countrymen, the workers on the land.

III. MONEY AND MORALS

CHAPTER XI

A LIVING ON THE LAND—IN PLAIN FIGURES

Of all the rural matters as to which the public is ill informed, there is none of which it is usually more ignorant than the actual remuneration which the agricultural labourer receives for his work. This is not surprising. There is no more complicated subject in the domain of knowledge about country life. All over the kingdom agricultural wages vary as remarkably as the local customs about the extras, in cash and kind, with which those wages are supplemented.

The authoritative statement on the subject of rural wages is the Report made to the Board of Trade in 1907 by Sir George Askwith, whose level-headedness has been so helpful in the settlement of several strikes. But even such an official document has to be carefully read.

In the first place, the facts supplied to Sir George were provided by the masters. It

is true that these masters were selected by responsible agricultural organisations. But the men are plainly justified in suggesting that, in some districts, a better report on rural wages may have been sent to Whitehall than was justified by the facts as a whole.

In the second place, the Report is based on the replies of only 15,000 farmers, and they could deal with the wages of only 78,000 men.

In the third place, the prices of food have risen since 1907. In many places, however, wages have also risen. In one district I know, for instance, the men are nominally about 1s. 6d. a week better off.

To sum up, the figures, taking one thing with another, probably give an approximate view of the men's position. There are areas where their position is better than these figures suggest, but there are others where it is worse.

In examining these figures the reader must understand that the Report has nothing to do with stewards, bailiffs, or foremen. It takes no account of casual labourers. It has nothing to tell us about women and young people—and in the North, particularly, there is still a great deal of female labour on the

land. We are concerned with four classes of farm hands only :—

Ordinary labourers	Cattlemen
Horsemen	Shepherds

An 'ordinary labourer,' it is unnecessary to define. It may be mentioned, however, that he works eleven or twelve hours a day in summer, and in winter during the hours of daylight, and usually on Saturdays as on other days. 'Horsemen' (horse-keepers, carters, wagoners, teamsters, ploughmen, etc.) work longer hours, and when not employed with their horses do 'ordinary labourer's' work. 'Cattlemen' (stockmen, cowmen, yard-men, beastmen, garthmen, byremen, etc.) have ordinarily the milking to do, which means very early rising. At the farm at which these words are written the cattlemen are in the byres by 4.30 a.m. As to shepherds, every one knows the exacting nature of their work.

From the latitude of Durham right away to the North of Scotland, farm servants of all classes are generally engaged by the year or half-year, and have continuous work at a stated wage. Board and lodging are provided for the unmarried men in farm-houses or bothies, and cottages are given to the married.

Sometimes the men eat in the farm kitchen, being waited on by a servant lass who, between her oat-cake and scone-baking and potato-peeling and other cooking for her ravenous charges, has little or nothing else to do but 'attend on the men.' Although weekly and monthly engagements are said to be increasing in some parts of Scotland, the custom of being hired by the year or half-year has been hitherto very little broken in upon.

In the South the situation is quite different. The men are engaged by the week, and when there is bad weather, and they cannot get on the land, and employment about the buildings cannot be found for them, they lose time. There may be weeks when an Essex man, for example, may take home only about 5s. or 6s. In England, cottages are usually provided for cattlemen.

As to holidays without loss of pay, it is doubtful if more than Christmas Day and Good Friday are generally recognised in England. Sometimes extra days are granted, but usually to take a holiday means to lose wages. In Scotland, the holidays run from two to eight days, four or six being the ordinary thing.

When the Scots half-year and year men are ill, they get their wages as a rule, but the income of the weekly wage-earner of the South ceases when he has to stay at home. Except, of course, from what he derives from his insurance.

As has been suggested, where the townsman who is inquiring about rural wages commonly goes wrong is in not realising that the farm hand is paid not only in wages, but in extras, both in cash and kind. On the other hand, in the South, where the weekly engagement system prevails, there are the deductions for lost time owing to bad weather.

There may also be a deduction of 1s. a week, the difference between the winter and summer wage rate. In the statistics to be quoted we have figures based on the actual value of the farm hand's job, that is his wage, plus extras in cash and kind, and less all deductions.

The value of a cottage has been taken uniformly at an average of £4, an amount which is undoubtedly low for some districts of Great Britain and high for others—I know plenty of cottages letting at £2 a year.

As to the value of board and lodging, this

has been assessed at £20 16s. a year (8s. a week) in England, £17 in Wales, and £20 in Scotland.

Setting aside cottages and the value of board and lodging, there are allowances and payments the value of which it is not easy to compute. Broadly speaking, Sir George says, where engagements are for long periods, as in the North, extra cash payments are usually few, but allowances in kind are frequent and not uncommonly of considerable value. On the other hand, where the engagements are for short periods, as in the arable districts of the East and South of England, additional cash earnings are common, while the value of the allowances in kind is comparatively unimportant.

All over England some farm work is piecework. In the Eastern and many of the Midland and Southern counties piecework is very prevalent. Haymaking, the corn harvest, the hoeing of various crops, and the lifting of turnips, mangolds, and potatoes are the sources of a great deal of piecework. Other operations often performed on piecework are ploughing, drilling, manure spreading, draining, hedge-cutting, cleaning ditches, threshing, thatching, and washing and shearing sheep.

In Scotland, extra payments for harvest are not made to any great extent to the men regularly attached to the farm, but food is often provided, or about 15s. to 25s. extra cash is paid in lieu of food.

It is obvious that though the ordinary labourer can make extra money at piece-work, the cattleman is not always free to do so. So he has such compensations as 'Michaelmas money,' which may run up to a five pound note, or he may actually receive the extra harvest payment. Then there is 'journey money,' payable when men take away a wagon-load of corn or straw or go for coal. It may be 6d. or 1s. a journey. There are also often bonuses for each live fowl or every pig or calf reared and sold. Shepherds come in for 'lamb money.'

As to payments in kind, what do they not consist of? The system is declining, it is true, but it has most assuredly to be reckoned with, particularly in the North. On this complicated matter I cannot do better than summarise Sir George Askwith :—

In England, generally speaking, ordinary labourers, particularly in the eastern and south-eastern counties, get little beyond potato ground and beer at the hay and corn harvests. Other allowances sometimes given are cottages rent free or at low rents, board

and lodging to unmarried men (chiefly in the North of England), extra food at harvest, beer at threshing, rough firing or fuel carted free, milk, and straw for pigs. In the western counties of England cider or beer is frequently given daily. Potato ground, the most common allowance, is sometimes given free, but more often at a low rent. In some cases the ploughing, tilling, and manuring of the ground are also done by the farmer, the labourer providing and putting in the seed and taking up the potatoes. Other farmers give an allowance of potatoes in lieu of potato ground. Men in charge of animals more frequently receive allowances than do ordinary labourers. Married men in most districts are generally provided with cottages and gardens, and frequently with potato ground, sometimes manured and tilled. Straw for pigs, fuel, milk, food, and beer or cider are also sometimes given to this class of men. In Nottinghamshire, North Cambridgeshire, and Lincolnshire the married men on yearly engagements receive many allowances, often including house and garden rent free, pork, wheat or flour, potatoes, and sometimes beer, milk, and coals. In the northern districts of Northumberland many of the shepherds are paid almost entirely in kind, being permitted, in addition to the ordinary allowances, to keep a number of their own sheep with those of their employer.

In Scotland, allowances in kind are more common than in England, it being the usual custom to provide board and lodging for unmarried men paid yearly or half-yearly wages, and cottages for the married men. With the cottages are usually given potatoes, and often milk and oatmeal, and generally fuel is either given or carted free. In some cases married men are allowed a cow or a cow's keep. In some districts, particularly in the north-east, unmarried men are often lodged in bothies and provided either

with their food or with allowances of milk, oatmeal, potatoes, and frequently fuel. Shepherds in all parts receive a considerable proportion of their wages in kind, sometimes being paid entirely in this way, and being allowed to keep their own flock with that of their employer. Waste wool and carcasses of 'fallen' sheep are frequently perquisites of the shepherd.

But the value of all these extras—first, extra pay and, second, payments in kind—is included in the return of wages now to be given. In the year 1907, then, the weekly earnings, inclusive of all extra payments and the value of allowances, and with deductions for lost time, received by the four classes of farm hands in England and Scotland averaged :—

Country.	Ordinary Labourers.		Horse-men.		Cattle-men.		Shep-herds.		Average.	
	s.	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*
England	17	6	18	9	19	1	19	7	18	4
Scotland	18	11	19	8	19	4	20	5	19	7

The average for Wales was 18s. and for Ireland 11s. 3d. It will be seen that in each class of farm hand the wages in Scotland were from 3d. to 1s. 5d. per week better than in England. If we set out as annual income the average wages paid in the four countries

to all classes of labourers, taken together, we have the following interesting figures :—

Scotland . .	£50 19	Wales . .	£46 16
England . .	£47 15	Ireland . .	£29 4

The average earnings are highest in the counties which contain or border on large industrial, mining, or residential centres, and lowest in those which are almost entirely agricultural. To that extent, the rural worker is indebted to his urban comrade. The counties in which the farm hand does best, that is, receives from 19s. to 22s., are :—

Scotland	s.	d.	England	s.	d.
Dumbarton .	21	7	Durham . .	22	0
Stirling . .	21	6	Northumberland	21	6
Lanark . .	21	5	Lancashire .	21	0
Clackmannan .	21	4	Middlesex .	20	10
Fife . . .	21	2	Nottingham .	20	4
Linlithgow .	21	2	Derby . .	20	2
Renfrew . .	21	2	Yorks., W. Riding	20	0
Edinburgh .	20	9	Surrey . .	19	9
Peebles . .	20	9	Westmorland .	19	9
Selkirk . .	20	7	Cumberland .	19	8
Forfar . .	20	6	Leicester . .	19	7
Kinross . .	20	5	Cheshire . .	19	5
Roxburgh . .	20	5	Kent . .	19	4
Ayr . .	20	3	Yorks., N. Riding	19	3
Berwick . .	20	1	Stafford . .	19	0
Perth . .	20	1			
Haddington .	19	9	**Wales**		
Kirkcudbright .	19	3	Glamorgan .	19	3
Argyll and Bute .	19	2			
Dumfries . .	19	1	**Ireland**		
Aberdeen . .	19	0	Antrim . .	14	0

The counties in which the worst wages are paid are:—

England	s.	d.
Oxford	16	4
Dorset	16	6
Norfolk	16	6
Suffolk	16	7
Wales		
Cardigan	16	6
Montgomery	16	7
Radnor	16	8

Scotland	s.	d.
Caithness	14	6
Shetland and Orkney	15	4
Ireland		
Roscommon	9	8
Mayo, Sligo, Westmeath	9	9

The highest wages paid in Ireland are below the level of the lowest-wage counties of England, Wales, and Scotland. There is no county in England or Wales and only one in Scotland—Caithness, in the remotest North, with 14s. 6d.—which comes in the 10s. and under 15s. table, in which all the Irish counties but those above quoted fall.

Between 15s. and 18s. there are seventeen English counties, four Welsh, and only three Scottish—those in the far North, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, and Shetland and Orkney.

When we come to the counties paying between 18s. and 20s., there are seventeen

English (counting the Ridings of Yorkshire as separate counties), eight Welsh, and eleven Scottish.

The counties which pay from 20s. to 22s. are to be found, seven of them in England and sixteen in Scotland. There are none in Wales.

We must remember that the foregoing sums are the average wages of four classes of farm hands—labourers, horsemen, cattlemen, and shepherds, taken together. If we take the income of the *ordinary labourer* only, we have the following table:—

Counties.	Wages.		Extra Earnings and Allowances.		Total.	
	s.	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*
Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire . . .	16	7	2	11	19	6
Northern Counties . .	12	0	7	2	19	2
North and West Midlands	15	8	8	0	18	3
South-Eastern Counties .	15	4	2	9	18	1
South-Western Counties .	13	6	8	4	16	10
South Midlands and Eastern Counties . .	13	5	2	8	16	1
Average for England .	14	6	8	0	17	6

In the three counties in which the ordinary

labourer came off worst the state of things was as follows :—

County.	Cash Wages.	Extra Earnings and Allowances.	Total.
	s. *d.*	*s.* *d.*	*s.* *d.*
Suffolk .	12 5	3 4	15 9
Norfolk .	12 7	2 9	15 4
Oxford .	12 11	2 0	14 11

When we come to horsemen we find incomes varying from 22s. 3d. in Lancashire to 16s. 2d. in Dorset.

In the case of cattlemen it seems that the rate in Wiltshire, the lowest county, is 17s. 2d. The highest county was Durham, with 22s. 9d. The value of the extra earnings and allowances of cattlemen varied from 4s. 2d. in Derbyshire to 1s. 7d. in Middlesex, and averaged 3s. per week for England as a whole.

When we get to shepherds we reach the best paid men on the land. In Durham their pay is 25s. 3d. In only four counties is the amount less than 18s.

Careful though Sir George Askwith's figures are, injustice is sometimes done to some districts and too favourable an impression is given of others by calculating even in

such small units as counties. For example, the county in which I happen to be writing this chapter figures in the statistics before us as among the blackest in regard to low pay, but I know that there are many farms where the financial position of the man on the land is attractive. The moral is that a county represents a very large area, and that, even on the strength of the Board of Trade statistics, it is not safe to dogmatise too much as to the condition of the farm hand in particular districts.

CHAPTER XII

NORTH AND SOUTH, AS JUDGED BY THEIR TASTES IN NEWSPAPERS

BUT the most important thing that needs to be borne in mind is that high rates of pay do not necessarily mean that the recipients are better off than men with smaller wages. The cost of living varies very much in different parts of Great Britain, and it has to be taken into account. Men have gone from low-wage districts to high-wage districts, and

have come back again because they found themselves no better off. The recent strike of farm labourers in Lancashire was in a district where the highest rural wages in England were paid.

On the other hand, taking every factor into the reckoning, an impression is certainly left on the mind by Sir George Askwith, which agrees with my own opinion, that the lot of the Northern farm hand is, in many cases and in several respects, a happier one than the lot of his Southern fellow-worker. It is not only that he gets more money. He lays it out to better advantage. Think of the milk a Northern labourer drinks in a week compared with what enters, say, an Oxfordshire labourer's cottage. Think, also, of the oatmeal he eats. Whoever heard of Oxfordshire or Essex labourers supping porridge? How often does the Oxfordshire or Essex labourer get a good beaker of milk? Why, he would be a little ashamed of drinking it! He would regard it as children's drink. And, unhappily, the children in too many of our rural districts do not get enough milk.

This lack of milk and oatmeal—to go no further into the diet question—has a

marked effect on the stamina of the Southern labourer. It is true, no doubt, that the Northern farm hand, like his fellow in the South, is now drinking a great deal of tea. But so long as he consumes all the milk and oatmeal he does now, he must have a very substantial advantage in health and stamina and grit over the worker on the land of the South. The farm kitchen feeding of the Northern farm hand is a national asset.

Reference has already been made to the educational advantages that the Northern farm worker has enjoyed. To these advantages he owes, in no small degree, his wiser living and his better bargaining power in the matter of wages.

The advantages he enjoys are not only reflected in his wages. They have their relation to the political situation. Compare the bearing of Northern and Southern farm hands at an election meeting. Compare, also, what happens in North and South Britain during canvassing and on polling days.

How instructive it would be to know the percentage of doctors, parsons, and other professional men in the families of Northern

and Southern farm hands. I have heard of a case in which a shepherd had twelve sons, and every one of them went to the university!

If Sir George had given us the percentage of farm hands in the North and South who take in papers and the number they take in, how interesting the figures would be!

Nothing shows more clearly the unwisdom of generalising about rural Britain than an examination of the tastes of the different districts in newspapers.

I have been comparing the contents of the papers published in two county towns. One of the counties is in Scotland, the other is in the South of England. Both the counties are pre-eminently agricultural. Both have a seaboard and ports. They are dissimilar only in point of size and population. The Southern county contains more than ten times as many people as the Northern one.

Here is my table of contents of what I shall call the Northern paper and the Southern paper—both eight-page papers, with eight columns of space to the page. The papers compared are of even dates, the figures being

the averages of different classes of contents in two successive issues :—

COLUMNS OF SPACE DEVOTED TO DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MATTER

Class of Matter	Northern Paper	Southern Paper
Leading article	¾	None
Editorial notes on the news of the world	1	None
Notes, chiefly of a gossipy character	None.	2
London letter	None.	1¼
News of the world . . .	2¼	None
Reviews of books and magazine notices	1½	None
Poetry	½	None
Church	1½	½
Special articles	2½	None
Agricultural and flower shows .	8	¾
Agriculture	2	½
Markets	1	½
Personal	½	½
Letters to the Editor . .	½	1¼
Sport, recreations, and games .	1¼	4
Police and inquests . . .	½	9¼
Local news	13½	19
Advertisements	26¾	24¼
	64	64

Statistics like these call for some care in interpretation, no doubt; but if they are worth anything at all they certainly give an

impression of the overwhelming moral and intellectual superiority of the Scots paper. It has, to begin with :—

Leading article . . .	¾ column
Book reviews . . .	1½ columns
Poetry	½ column
Special articles . . .	2½ columns
News of the world . .	2¼ columns

and the English paper has none of these.

On the other hand, the Southern paper has the appalling proportion of nine and a quarter columns of police and inquests—that is, a column and a quarter over a page—and the Northern paper has only half a column. While the English paper gives two columns of gossip, the Scots one prints a column of notes on the news of the world. Against the Southern paper's London gossip, the Northern paper has two and a quarter columns of the news of the world. The Southern paper's readers get a third of the church news, but nearly four times the sport and games placed before the buyers of the Northern paper.

Some credit should be given to the Southern paper for its larger quantity of letters to the editor. I am inclined to think, however, that when agricultural shows and flower

shows are not so pressing in the North, the Northern paper is able to show that its readers have an excellent gift in public letter-writing.

When we come to the business concerns of the two counties, we find agriculture and markets given three columns in the Scots paper but only a single column in the English journal. The space is needed for police and sport.

If we disregard tables, and glance at the two papers, cursory comparison is again to the great advantage of the Scots journal. The outstanding feature of the Southern paper is the scare headings to its mass of police and inquests. The headlines in the Scots journal have the reserve of those in *The Times*. The Northern journal is better printed than the English one and on better paper, and owing to the small type used, the quantity of matter provided is prodigious.

Of the seriousness and solidity, yet entertaining character of the contents, there can be no question. There is no concession to the flesh in the typographical presentation of the leader. It is not in the traditional three paragraphs; there is no 'break' in it

from start to finish! Again, a column and a quarter literary article has only one paragraph 'break' in a column.

Even the smallest paragraphs in this journal are neatly written. There are no split infinitives anywhere, and there is no slang. The paper is, in many respects, up to the level of good daily papers, and is the superior of some. There is nothing cheap, trivial, or sensational in it. The same refinement characterises the wording and setting of the advertisements. It is clearly a paper for fairly well-educated people.

It may be suggested, perhaps, that the Southern paper, owing to relative nearness to London, suffers from competition with the London papers, many people being content with the Metropolitan dailies. It is doubtful if much weight can be attached to this view. As already pointed out, the circulation of the Southern paper is in excess of that attained by the Northern paper, and it has a very much larger population to appeal to. If people in its county can have London papers, people in the Northern county are also within reach of important daily papers. There can be no doubt that more daily papers are bought per head of the

Northern population than per head of the Southern one.

No, the true reason of the inferiority of the Southern paper to the Northern paper is that the agricultural population of the Southern county is, in point of education, a generation behind the agricultural population of the Northern one, and their outlook on life is, in consequence, less elevated.

CHAPTER XIII

FOR AND AGAINST A STANDARD WAGE AND TRADE UNIONISM

You can say labourin's the hardest graft as a man can have. When yo're used to it yo' don't feel it so much. But it's mostly work and bed, work and bed, and bein' out in all sorts o' weather, summer and winter. The way I look at it is that a man should be what yo'd call paid for his work. A lot of folk think there's nothin' in it, and they're a good deal mista'en. It takes years before yo' can be what yo' may call a first-rate man. I think I shall get away. I can get a job drivin' in Bowton (Bolton.) That would suit me better than this. Not as t' wages is what yo' may call much better, but there's none o' this sort o' work. That's t' road as I look at it.—An old labourer, reported in the *Manchester Guardian*.

WAGES are rising on the land, as in the towns. It is only fair to remember though,

that food prices are rising also. But the farm hand says wages are not rising fast enough. The statistics at three different periods, for a single class of workers, the best paid class, shepherds, may be summarised as follows :—

Country.	1898.		1902.		1907.	
	s.	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*
Scotland .	18	2	19	5	19	7
England .	16	9	17	5	17	7

Scotland is relatively a poorer country than England, and her farmers have worse climatic conditions to contend with than English farmers experience. Yet, if we take the highest rate of wages, sixteen Scots counties pay it, but only seven English ones. When we take the lowest rate of wages, seventeen English counties pay it, but only three Scots counties and those in the farthest north, almost in Norway. There is a wide black belt of low wage-paying counties right across England from the eastern counties to Wales.

Can we honestly say to an Oxfordshire labourer who comes to us for counsel that he has the same chance as he would have

in Canada of being an upstanding, self-respecting man?

As to the situation in another agricultural county, Essex, the newspaper which has been published in the county for more than a century, and may be supposed, therefore, to know something about it, said the other week: 'What the working man of the villages wants is a living wage so that he can get a little better food and a house which possesses a certain degree of comfort.'

It is perfectly clear that the average wage of the average labourer in the South fails to give him a sufficiently secure economic basis, and leaves him no adequate margin for mental improvement.

Mr Prothero, the ex-editor of what *The Times* calls 'the Conservative *Quarterly Review*,' is also the agent of a great land-owner, the Duke of Bedford. Mr Prothero has written: 'Most (labourers) are still poorly paid; many are precariously employed and poorly housed; among all, poverty is chronic, and though destitution is certainly rare, the dread of it is seldom absent. Any savings the farm worker is able to get together are insufficient to put his foot on the ladder of prosperity.'

So long as this is the case patriotic men must be glad to know that there is 'unrest' in the rural districts. May we not marvel that we have travelled so short a distance from the state of things described in Arthur Young's famous ale-house scene a century and a half ago. 'If I am diligent' (Young makes the labourer, sitting soaking in the ale-house, ask), 'shall I have leave to build a cottage? If I am sober, shall I have land? You offer no motives. Bring me another pot!'

Undoubtedly, we must work toward the ideal of a standard wage, which by the way is not a new Lloyd Georgian proposal at all, but a suggestion of mature years. The assessment of wages by the magistrates is arranged for in Acts of Elizabeth, James, and George II. In the eighteenth century it was warmly advocated by two responsible writers separately—to their credit be it said that they were clergymen—and a Bill was twice introduced into Parliament.

The case against the standard wage is that if it were established immediately, it would put twenty per cent. of our labourers —the older and less efficient ones—out of work, and involve a large amount of farm work being done by casuals who would be

taken on and off as wanted; and casual labour is a curse, although very convenient to the employer. The farmer would consider the total sum he could pay in wages, and would engage men accordingly, refraining from engaging any who were old or not first-class workers. He might find it difficult to manage with fewer men, but he would try to do so. He would put off jobs such as hedging, ditching, digging corners, general tidying-up, etc., and he would use more machinery. He would speed everything up, and, though this would not be bad for him, the labourer would not gain by it. The result of a legal standard wage would also be, it is asserted, more land being laid down to grass and a retardation of intensive agriculture.

It may well be admitted that the standard wage plan presents a great many more difficulties than some of those who have advocated it out of the kindness of their hearts, rather than from a thorough knowledge of farming, have any notion of. And some of the most trustworthy students of the subject are more certain, perhaps, of the fact that wages have got to be higher in the black belt than of the precise way in which they can be raised. A recognised authority

says, for instance: 'It is impossible to feel that the wages now paid in the South are what one would like to see.'

Although the problem of the elderly and the second-rate workers, who are now paid less than normal rates, must be borne in mind, we need not be scared by any threat of machinery or of more business-like methods by which the labourers would eventually suffer. What is wrong with the present system is that many farmers do not feel the burden of wages sufficiently to look after labour properly, on the farm or off. As to the fear of land being laid down to grass because of higher wages, are not suggestions of this sort common form in resisting all movements for reform?

The curious difference in the wage rates of different parts of the kingdom may well engage the attention of the student of the standard wage question. Why are wages so low in some parts, so much higher in other parts, and still higher elsewhere? It is supposed that the explanation is to be found in the existence of coal, of cities, of ports, or, as in the North of Scotland, in the existence of large estates paying high wages to gillies and other servants.

But are there not parts of Scotland where good rural wages are paid where this rule hardly applies? Is one of the causes of higher wages in Scotland that wages in North Britain were never supplemented by Poor Law relief as they were in England before the accession of Queen Victoria? Has not the traditional low wage persisted in the South of England long after the direct effect of the relief system disappeared?

Again, may not account be taken of the higher intelligence and better education of the Scottish farm hand, leading him to demand more for his services?

But an explanation of the reason why higher wages have to be paid in certain parts of the kingdom is not also an explanation of *how the farmers are able to pay them.* The question why the farmers of the North are able to pay higher wages than the farmers of the South has never been fully explained.

If they are corn farmers, they do not get more for their crops, because the price of corn is very much the same in Scotland and England. Do they get more for their other produce relative to the expense—apart from wages—of growing or rearing it? It would be interesting to see some figures on

this point.[1] We know that the Northerners' rents are not lower and that their climate is more uncertain. Is it wholly the advantage of a good soil and a nearness to Edinburgh and a port that enables the farmers of the Lothians—who pay thrice the rent of Essex agriculturists farming within sight of the glare of London—to pay high wages? Can it be that the Northern farmer is able to pay more because, by reason of his intelligence, he often knows how to make more? Are we face to face, in parts of Southern England, with employers who hug the

[1] Mr Chiozza Money has prepared an interesting table bearing on this point:—

PRICE OF CORN COMPARED WITH RATES OF AGRICULTURAL EARNINGS

	Earnings 1907*		Wheat Prices 1911				
	s.	d.	s.	d.		s.	d.
Where wages are 20s. and over—							
Durham	22	0	30	8	to	31	9
Lancashire	21	0	31	5	,,	33	0
Yorks. (W. Riding)	20	0	29	10	,,	32	8
Where wages are 18s. to 20s.—							
Surrey	19	9	30	10	to	33	5
Glamorgan	19	3	33	0	,,	—	—
Yorks. (E. Riding)	18	9	30	7	,,	31	9
Where wages are 15s. to 18s.—							
Northamptonshire	17	10	31	2	to	31	8
Wiltshire	16	9	30	8	,,	31	2
Oxfordshire	16	4	30	4	,,	31	9

* The earnings for 1911 are not available.

delusion of cheap labour—which is really dear because it is inefficient, and it does not by its cost stimulate them to maintain a high level of business organisation and to march with the times?

An old farmer in the South once assured me that there were low wages in the South and high wages in the North because the Northeners were worth more. It was a matter of climate, and he contended that the Southerner would always be slower than the Northerner. As he had to live in a good deal of cold weather he was 'bred up lively.' Certainly a well-known mid-England farmer, who does a good trade in sending sheep up North, has assured me that he has made some experiments with labourers, and he found that when Scots labourers came South they did not work so hard, and that when Southern labourers went North they seemed to 'sharpen up a bit.' Mr Strutt, as an Essex employer, says that 'the real question is whether we can get the workmen in the South to do the work the workmen in the North get through.' In the long run, he thinks, 'if higher wages were paid in the South, more work could be done.' He points out that 'low wages exist chiefly where

agriculture has been least prosperous, and where rents have fallen to the lowest point.'

But need agriculture have been so unprosperous in the low-wage districts? How is it that, in Essex, Scotsmen did not hesitate to take the farms on which the native agriculturist failed? How is it that the Northerners have done so remarkably well with these farms?

Again, if agriculture was not prosperous a few years ago, farmers are now doing very well indeed. Yet the farmers of the South, as a class, do not seem to have done all they could for their men. 'There is always the haunting fear,' some one writes, 'that agricultural prices may collapse again.' But what are the precise grounds for such a fear? And would not the Agricultural Wage Board system provide for a suitable wage adjustment to prices?

One point which Mr Strutt makes is that, 'if the wages in the country were really less than those in the town, we should see a much larger emigration of the young men to the Colonies.' No doubt many people underestimate the labourer's real financial position in comparison with that of his fellow-worker in town. I have myself got into trouble with

one or two excitable members of Parliament by drawing attention to some actual facts. But will any one assert that the number of agricultural workers emigrating is not unduly large? Some second-rate men are going from the villages to Canada and Australia, no doubt, but a number of first-rate men are also going. It has been contended that rural emigration is taking place much more from the districts where high wages are paid than from districts where low wages are common. If it should prove to be the fact that there is a greater proportion of emigration from high-wage districts, is not the explanation likely to be that the men of the high-wage districts are, on the whole, of a higher class than those of the low-wage districts, and that even when their wages are raised a bit they feel that for the work they do, and the experience they have gained, they ought to be worth more?

'My own view,' Mr Strutt once told me, 'is that agricultural labourers want opportunities more than anything else.' This is surely true. Obviously, however, opportunities which do not include good wages equal to providing the means to reach out for those opportunities will not do very much.

Many people take the position as to a standard wage that, 'if wages rise of their own accord, the friendly relations between men and masters will not be disturbed.' Assuredly, the labourers as a class do not wish to disturb those friendly relations. In spite of their occasional ill-treatment, the feeling of labourers towards their masters is on the whole friendly, but they think that their relations would be none the less friendly if they were on a juster basis.

Trade unionism is a most hopeful means by which to raise wages, and I shall be very sorry if trade unionism does not have a large share in bettering the position of the men. In the backward districts nothing could be more wholesome than that the labourers should feel that it was largely by their own efforts that the less progressive masters had been got to pay a decent wage rate. A beginning has been made with trade unionism in various parts of England, and I have not heard of any action being taken of which a good master would disapprove.

What other means is there but trade unionism by which labourers can stand up to bad masters and develop a corporate feeling? So long as the labourer is so unaccustomed

to acting with his fellows, and so unpractised in organisation as he is now, unionism can only make slow progress, and uneducated men are sometimes liable to make an unwise choice of leaders. But why should unionism, which is good for farmers, who have their Farmers' Union; surveyors, who have their Institution; and authors, who have their Authors' Society, be essentially bad for the labourer?

We all know that farming is in a special category by reason of its dependence on weather conditions and on the care of stock, and that a cessation of work would be serious. But it is only in an abnormal state of things that trade unionism means strikes. All the rest of the time the employers have the great advantage of dealing with organised instead of disorganised labour. To concentrate attention on trying to make out the strongest possible case against agricultural trade unionism does not seem a hopeful policy when there is every indication that agricultural trade unionism has come to stay. The wiser course seems to be to make an effort to understand and to meet the just claims of the men as to wages and housing; and as to unionism, to recognise frankly, as Colonel

Lockwood, the Conservative member for one of the Essex divisions, said recently, that 'no class will get the barest meed of justice unless they band themselves together.' In expressing this opinion, he was only walking in the footsteps of Mr Disraeli, who once told a meeting of farmers that 'an agricultural labourer has as much right to combine for the bettering of his condition as a manufacturing labourer or a worker in metal.'

It is a good omen that there is a movement for Agricultural Wages Boards in both parties, and therefore the details are likely to be impartially considered. The point that there are labourers who, by reason of age or infirmity are unable to earn full wages, is got over in the Unionist Agricultural Employment Boards Bill by providing, as in Australia, that permits may be given entitling the holders to work for a lower wage than that fixed by the District Board.

By the way, it is noteworthy that, in the Australian State, which has never had a Labour Ministry, there are now no fewer than 131 Wages Boards formed or in process of formation for different trades. Mr Henry Stead, writing recently from Melbourne, says: 'The principle embodied in the Victorian Wages

Board system is the same as that in the British jury system, that a man can be tried only by his peers. The boards are composed of equal numbers of employers and employed, usually six of each, carefully chosen so that every shade of interest shall be represented. Each board is in effect a jury of trade experts thoroughly versed in all the requirements and intricacies of the particular trade it is dealing with. The members meet under a neutral chairman, who sees fair play and votes only in the case of a deadlock. The members are paid 5s. to 10s. a sitting, depending upon its length. Their decisions are drawn up and submitted to the Trade Department of the Government, which sees that they accurately and legally set forth the decision arrived at. The great advantage of the system is that it brings the parties into conference, and enables them quietly to discuss the points of difference. They have expert knowledge of the matter in dispute, and leave the conference room with a better understanding of each other, knowing, too, that all have helped to arrive at the final decision.'

It is constantly suggested that agricultural conditions are too complicated for a

Wages Board system to be workable. In this connection the following extract from a speech of Sir George Askwith is well worth attention. It refers to the condition of things in the lace trade. 'The due rate of wages in classes of work had to be found by joint request of employers and employees. The industry has three branches—the plain net, the lace curtain, and the fancy laces. The plain net section is not so complicated as the other sections, but the curtain has eight different cards on which work is produced, and the fancy lace had twenty-one, and now has fifteen—thick thread laces, plain bobbin fining and Valenciennes, torchons, Maltese, blondes, Spanish, Chantilly, cotton loop, sprigs, and many others. There had to be taken into account the classes of lace being made, the number of points to the inch, the number of bars, and the length of the rack, and many other matters besides. The wages of each class and branch of laceworkers required separate consideration, and were discussed and fought word by word and line by line upon these numbers of cards. In few instances did dispute arise as to the amount of a minimum wage.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW MEN AND MASTERS MIGHT EARN MORE

It is many years ago since Disraeli justified the action of farm labourers in combining. Yet to-day we may read in *The Times* 'Pilgrimage of British Farming' that the agricultural labourer, 'considering the comparatively skilled character of his work, is much worse paid than his fellows in any other industry. His hours are very long, his holidays few or none, and he has no trade union to protect him from the occasional tyranny of his employer.'

'Not that,' as the writer explains, 'the farmer is a bad master, as a rule, but sometimes, from inability to appreciate the changed conditions under which labour has to be managed, he plays the bully and mishandles his men, to his own detriment.' As to the complaint that some of the men are not worth their wages, our authority says bluntly: 'That is very probably true; they will have to be more highly paid still before they will earn their money.'

Has the average farmer shown quite the enterprise and foresight of the average factory owner or merchant in managing his men's labour and in directing their strength and intelligence? Take the general complaint that the old skill in such difficult work as draining and thatching is passing away. In some districts, our authority mentions, attempts are being made to teach these arts by means of classes, but, as he says, this seems to be a wrong method of going to work. 'The farmer ought to be the teacher, either with his own hands or by ensuring that some of the lads are set to work with the skilled leader.' In many cases, however, 'the master ought to be taught to dispense with the craft rather than the men to practise it. For example, sheep-shearers are scarce in many districts, but instead of instructing men in the use of the shears, it would be wiser to show the master the advantages of a machine. Similarly, Dutch barns are more economical than the best of thatchers.'

The same clear-sighted authority has also a common-sense remark on the suggestion that it is elementary education that is driving men off the land. That is, he says, 'mostly nonsense.' The truth is that 'fewer men are

needed per acre with every introduction of machinery; and indeed it is the better ideal to be able to manage a farm with two men per 100 acres, minding machines and earning 30s. a week each than with ten men digging or its equivalent at 10s. a week each.' Many large farmers have expressed the opinion to me that more would be made of labour on the farm and off it if it cost more.

As to the 'thriftlessness' and 'low standard' of some labourers, of which one hears *ad nauseam*, who but their betters have had the teaching of them? Who but their betters have had the preaching at them? At the door of whom does the responsibility lie to lead them towards thrift, efficiency, and a higher moral standard?

There is still much too large a consumption of intoxicants in English villages. But those who use intoxicants freely themselves cannot fairly expect labourers to believe that drink is such a bad thing. (Most people are amazed to learn that the consumption of absolute alcohol in an agricultural country like Holland in 1905 has been stated to have been very little more than half that in Great Britain and Ireland !)

Another matter is housing. A high-class

of labour cannot be got from families whose homes and prospects are little calculated to stimulate their self-respect.

As to the moral and intellectual welfare of the labourer generally, while much is done in many villages, are there not as many where the right kind of uplifting agencies are to seek?

Undoubtedly, one way in which farmers can make their men, in Mr Hall's phrase, 'earn more for both' is to listen more sympathetically than is common to proposals for their moral and physical betterment which have had happy results elsewhere in Great Britain or out of it.

It can hardly be questioned that the labourers in thousands of villages would be more efficient physically if they were differently fed. Apart from the question of wages, it is not so much cookery that needs to be taught in the villages, though some really practical instruction in cookery is desirable in many districts, as the money's worth and actual value of different foods, and a wise management of wages.

It is necessary, however, that there should be a wage sufficient to procure enough food of the right kinds. Very few well-to-do people

have ever closely studied the agricultural labourer's budget. It is injudicious to speak in the same sentence of the earnings of a town labourer and a rural labourer, because they cannot be fairly compared. But when it is argued that to maintain the mere physical efficiency of a family of two adults and three children in London, 25s. a week is required, it is worth noting that the calculation is based on the assumption, as Mrs Sidney Webb says, 'that the wage is expended on necessaries only, and according to the most scientific principles. If there are more than three children, if the father smokes and drinks, or if the mother falls short in her knowledge of domestic economy, then this minimum is insufficient, even for the physical necessities of life. Moreover, prices are steadily rising. The average level was 5 per cent. higher in 1912 than in 1911. No wage ought, therefore, to be less than 30s.'

Some years ago a paper was published in the 'Sociological Papers' of the Sociological Society, by Mr H. H. Mann, called *Life in an Agricultural Village in England.* It was the result of an attempt made by the author and assistants 'during the autumn of 1903' to

place under the microscope of the political economist the life and work of the labouring folk in a purely agricultural village in Bedfordshire called Ridgmont.

There were 104 working-class families, numbering 390 souls, in Ridgmont. The total population was 467. The village is largely owned and largely employed by the Duke of Bedford, and his famous experimental fruit farm and the farm which he placed at the disposal of the Royal Agricultural Society are near. What are the results of all the extensive inquiries made as to the means of livelihood and way of living of this rural community, investigations which seem to touch everything, from 'money sent home by children' to the finance of hen-runs, allotments, and sow-keeping? The data may perhaps be fairly summarised as follows:—

1. That the average wages of a labourer, who was neither too old nor too young to receive full pay, and was not a foreman, were, inclusive of extras, 14s. 4d. a week.

2. That the profit on an allotment of an eighth of an acre was 6d. a week if good land, and 3d. a week if bad land; on the fattening of two pigs, 5d. a week; and on fowls, 'negligible.'

3. That a labourer, with a wife and three children, needed, in order to keep himself and household in physical efficiency, 18s. 4d. a week:—

MINIMUM NECESSARY EXPENDITURE WEEKLY FOR PHYSICAL EFFICIENCY

Family.	Food.		Rent.		Sundries.		Total.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
1 man and 1 woman .	6	0	1	6	2	4	9	10
1 man, 1 woman, 1 child .	8	3	1	6	2	11	12	8
" " 2 children	10	6	1	6	3	6	15	6
" " 3 "	12	9	1	6	4	1	18	4
" " 4 "	15	0	1	6	4	8	21	2
" " 5 "	17	3	1	6	5	3	24	0
" " 6 "	19	6	1	6	5	10	26	10
" " 7 "	21	9	2	0	6	5	30	2
" " 8 "	24	0	2	0	7	0	33	0

4. That 75 out of 390 working-class folk were receiving parish relief.

5. That 160 persons out of the 390, or 41 in every 100, did not obtain 'the necessary amount of money to enable them to remain in physical health.'

6. That as many as 213 more belonged to families who received less than 2s. beyond the sum required for physical efficiency.

7. That out of the 160 persons who did 'not obtain the necessary amount of money to enable them to remain in physical health,'

3 (average earnings, 8s. 10½d.) owed their poverty to illness or old age of the wage-earner; 11 (average earnings, 6s.) to the death or desertion of the wage-earner; 13 (average earnings, 11s. 9d.) to irregularity of work (due in every case but one to the wage-earner's fault); 25 (average earnings, 21s. 4d.) to largeness of family (average size of family, 8·2); and 31 (average earnings, 15s. 6d.) to lowness of wages (average size of family, 5); but none—the period during which the investigation was made was August, and a different tale might have been told in the winter—to the wage-earner being out of work.

8. That of the 160 in poverty, 83 were persons under 16, 36 between 25 and 55, 29 over 55, and 12 between 16 and 25; and that, of the 160 persons in poverty, 33 were undoubtedly suffering owing to 'the unwise and vicious expenditure of money or the deliberate avoidance of work when it can be obtained.'

And Mr Mann's private opinion on these striking statistics? It was:—

1. That 'the crying cause of secondary poverty ["due to an uneconomical application of earnings"] is the drink habit.

Further, it has a great deal to do as a contributory cause of much primary poverty ["caused by an insufficiency of earnings, even when most economically applied, to provide for physical efficiency"]. There are three public-houses, so the allowance is very excessive.'

2. That 'a man earning the average rate of wages must descend below the primary poverty line so soon as he has two children, unless he is able to supplement his income by an allotment, by fattening and breeding pigs, or by other means; that he will remain below the poverty line until the eldest child leaves school and begins to earn money; and that even if he has no more than two children, his only chance to save will be in his later life when the children are grown up, and are earning money or have left home. This is the most favourable case: if there are more children the period of poverty is longer and the chance of saving less. In any case during life it is a weary and continual round of poverty. During childhood, poverty conditions are almost inevitable. As a boy grows up, there are a few years' intermission till, as a young man, he has two children; then poverty again till these children grow

up, and, finally, at best, a penurious old age, barely lifted above the poverty line.'

3. That 'the standard of life on the land is lower than in the cities; the chances of success are less and of poverty are greater; life is less interesting; and the likelihood of the workhouse as the place of residence in old age the greater.'

All this, as I say, was the result of investigations made in 1903, Since that time, though wages have risen a little and the old people have benefited by Old Age Pensions, and the younger people by National Insurance and compensation for accidents, the prices of food have considerably increased.

Without expressing an opinion on the accuracy of the estimates given in the paper—a single autumn is not long to devote to the investigation of such a complicated problem as the actual income of the inhabitants of a whole village—we may notice that the average wages, including extras, of a Ridgmont agricultural labourer are reported at 14s. 4d. When we turn to the figures of the Labour Department of the Board of Trade (Second Report by Mr Wilson Fox, issued about the same time) we find the average

for Bedfordshire agricultural labourers given as 16s. 6d., and the average of no county in England returned as low as 14s. 4d., while the average for the whole country is stated to be 17s. 5d. If men in charge of animals are included, add another 10d., so making it *18s. 3d.*

After what fashion do the Government's figures show that labourers live? According to the returns made in respect of 102 families scattered throughout the Northern, Midland, Eastern, and Southern counties, the average value of the food consumed by a labourer with a wife and four children is 13s. 6d. (reckoning pork, vegetables, eggs, etc., produced at home at shop prices, which are of course much above cost). But *Life in an Agricultural Village* says that 'to keep them in physical efficiency' a countryman, his wife, and four children need to spend 15s. a week on food. Plainly, it is not easy to reconcile these figures. And as the official average of 13s. 6d. is only obtained by the Northern counties families consuming 14s. 10d. worth (while Midland families eat only 13s. 6d., the Eastern 12s. 4d., and the Southern 13s. 4d. worth), some three-quarters or so of the agricultural labourers of England, if the

Board of Trade returns may be trusted, would seem to be physically inefficient.

How difficult it is for figures alone to picture the life of the labourer may be seen from the fact that Mr Wilson Fox's budget, even when he strikes a common average for ordinary labourers and men in charge of animals (who are paid at higher rates), looks badly enough. I may set out his figures as follows:—

	s.	d.	s.	d.
Average earnings (exclusive of earnings of wives and children and of any profits from the sale of home-grown produce, lodgers, etc.) .			18	8
Deduct food for man, woman, and four children (based on ordinary retail shop prices—the prices at the village shop, where credit is often required, are unduly high—and no allowance made for the smaller cost of home-grown food) . . .	13	6		
Rent	1	6		
Fire and light.	1	9		
Clothes	3	0		
Club	0	6		
			20	3
Deficit			2	0

If one adds to the expenditure something for beer, tobacco, church or chapel, treats, and wear and tear and replacing of furniture and domestic utensils, the deficit certainly

grows alarmingly. Yet most rural residents know well enough that the average household of six with 18s. 3d. a week to do with, and only 1s. 6d. a week to pay for rent, does manage to rub along. Mr Fox says: 'The labourer's garden produce may be valued at 6d. to 2s. a week; 1s. a week might be realised from poultry keeping; and 3d. to 4d. a week for keeping a pig.' He also speaks of earnings of the wife and children. Even then, however, the budget takes some balancing—on paper. But, happily, this is not what the labourer's wife is called on to do. How she manages is known—to those who live in the country all the year round.

CHAPTER XV

THE LABOURER'S MENU

No one can read through the early Blue Book, with which we have been dealing, without feeling how little the average townsman is likely to know about the ways and life of his fellows on the land.

It is not only that wages differ according to the part of the country one is in. The

labourer's dietaries, his way of working, his housing, his technical language, are hardly the same in two counties. If one knew all about Hodge of the Fens, one's knowledge would stand one in poor enough stead in discussing the labourers of Devonshire or of the Border. It is like knowing one of the few hundred dialects of China: each one belongs only to a limited district.

What does even a labourer, if he belongs to, say, Essex, know of foggers, garthmen, hinds, halflins, slingers, darrikers, confined men, arles, gains, cot men, followers, speaning, and bolls? In one part of the country, labourers live in their masters' cottages; in another part in some one else's. In some counties, as in Northumberland and Durham, women are still engaged in the fields, and there are women stewards; in others 'females' are never seen on the land from one year's end to another. In many districts there is no opening for the daughters of a labourer but in service; in other districts his value is increased in the eyes of the farmer by the possession of daughters.

While in some areas the extras received by a farm hand may be trifling, elsewhere not only a house and a garden but twenty-five

stones of pork, several sacks of grain or flour, fifty stones of potatoes, and possibly coals as well as milk are his portion in addition to his money payment. Shepherds in some cases get beyond their wages a trifling commission on their lambs; in certain parts of the country their whole remuneration is in kind, and they are pleased to have it so. One is acquainted with rural districts in which pigs are kept by very few men; in other districts the labourers have small holdings, or may have a cow or cows kept for them by their masters.

A magazine writer recently criticised the present system on which labourers are engaged in many districts; but it is a curious fact that in the North, where it is the custom to engage men by the year or half-year and pay them, rain or shine, a regular weekly wage, the men change their situations much more frequently than in the South, where weekly engagements are common and men lose a day's work or part of a day's work when it is wet. Nor do labourers all over the country 'agree to take their money' in the same way. In some places they are paid weekly, but in other parts the wages are given only fortnightly or monthly; and in large districts the greater part of the pay is

received in a lump sum at the end of the half-year or year.

Attacks are made on the system of 'close villages,' in which all the cottages belong to the local landowner; but as Mr Wilson Fox points out, cottages in 'open villages' are 'frequently very inferior in construction and condition, and are often rented higher.' Needless to say that 'the rent received for cottages by landowners has generally no relation to the initial cost of building them.' Even the '£150 cottage' is hardly a profitable investment at an eighteenpenny rent. In this connection it is of importance to notice the statement that 'the decline in the number of farm labourers between 1891 and 1901 has resulted in the decrease of overcrowding in the cottages.' Another influence is also at work to reduce overcrowding, as was lately pointed out by a clerical correspondent —the artificial limitation of the number of children, a practice which is undoubtedly spreading in the villages.

It may be of interest to reproduce the following estimate from the Blue Book of 'the annual earnings of a family with two grown-up sons and two daughters in a district where the money wages are 18s. a

week' (as in the North Riding of Yorkshire, Cheshire, Monmouth, Lincoln, Staffordshire, and Shropshire):—

	£	s.	d.
The Father—			
Weekly wages, 18s. a week . .	46	16	0
House	4	5	0
1200 yards of potatoes . .	4	0	0
Coals led free	1	4	0
	56	5	0
Two Sons—			
Weekly wages, 18s. a week . .	93	12	0
1200 yards of potatoes each .	8	0	0
	101	12	0
Two Daughters—			
1s. 6d. a day in winter (say 24½ weeks)	22	1	0
1s. 8d. a day in summer (say 21½ weeks)	21	10	0
3s. a day during harvest (say 20 days)	6	0	0
	49	11	0
Total earnings of family . .	207	8	0

In the case of a married hind with one son and one daughter only, the total family earnings on the same scale would amount to £131 16s. 6d.

A striking difference between the agricultural system of one part of the country and another is that 'in Cumberland, Westmorland, and North Lancashire the great majority of the farm servants are unmarried men who lodge and board in the farm-houses,

and the ordinary labourers, as known in other parts of England, are in a considerable minority.'

The Blue Book contains several pages of 'examples of the class of food eaten in various localities by farm labourers.' It will be of interest to reproduce a few bills of fare:

DEVONSHIRE

Week-days

Breakfast.—Home-cured bacon and fried potatoes. Tea. (Eggs if about eighteen a shilling.)

Dinner.—Meat (fresh or salt), hot or cold vegetables, suet pudding.

Supper.—A pasty, or fried fish, potatoes, tea.

Sundays

Breakfast.—Bread, butter, cake, tea.

Dinner.—Roast fresh meat, potatoes, vegetables. Apple tart when in season.

Tea.—Bread, butter, cake, tea.

Supper.—Cold meat, pickles, tea.

NORFOLK

Breakfast.—Bread, butter, dripping, sometimes pork (salted). Children have bread, jam, treacle, and in some cases Quaker oats.

Dinner.—Norfolk dumplings or pork, or sometimes meat left over from Sundays, sometimes stewed bones to make gravy, potatoes, bread, cheese, sometimes currant dumplings. (*Sundays*, beef or pork, fruit pies or jam tarts.)

Tea and Supper.—Bread, butter, dripping, jam, tea, sometimes cake. (*Sundays*, some men have tinned beef or tinned salmon.)

Northumberland (North)

Breakfast.—Bread, butter, cheese, bacon, tea.

Dinner.—Broth, bacon, or cold beef, potatoes, suet or currant dumpling, rice or bread pudding, cabbage or turnips. (On *Sundays*, roast beef, dumpling or rhubarb tart.)

Tea.—Bread, butter, cheese or jam, tea.

Supper.—Coffee, bread and cheese.

Huntingdonshire

Breakfast.—Bread and milk, bread and lard, sop with sugar, oatmeal, tea, sometimes herrings when in season. Salt pork for the men.

Dinner.—Onion and potato pudding, with a little piece of salt pork in it, suet dumplings, potatoes, and vegetables. Rice pudding for children. (*Sundays*, a small piece of beef or mutton.)

Tea.—Bread and lard, sometimes butter or jam, tea.

Supper.—If supper taken, bread and cheese, occasionally herrings.

Yorkshire (North Riding)

Week-days

Breakfast.—Bread, bacon, tea.

Dinner.—Bread, potatoes, cold beef or mutton, fruit pie or pudding, and tea.

Tea or Supper.—Bread, butter, bacon or cheese, tea, sometimes potatoes.

Sundays

Breakfast.—Bread, butter, bacon, tea.

Dinner.—Hot roast beef or mutton, bread, potatoes, green vegetables, fruit pie or pudding, tea

Tea.—Hot toast, cakes, tea, butter or jam.

Supper.—Cold meat and potatoes.

The single men who are housed in the farm-houses of the Northern counties are well fed, 'frequently having five meals a day.' It is in the Northern and Eastern counties that the practice of making bread at home survives. (My own village in Essex is visited by four bakers' carts, though most of the cottages have the old brick bread ovens.) The average weekly consumption of milk by families, consisting of a man and wife and four children, in 114 districts from which there are returns, was 4½ pints (that is reckoning in terms of new milk, although skimmed milk is also largely bought by labourers). In the Eastern district the consumption falls to 3½ pints; in the North it rises to 6½ pints. While bread and flour to a greater value than the amount spent on meat are bought in the Southern counties, 5s. 2½d. worth of meat to 2s. 10¾d. worth of bread and flour is purchased in the North.

The contrast between the food expenditure of England and Scotland is even more interesting. While the average purchase of milk in Scotland per week for a family of six is 11¼ pints of new, 9 pints of skimmed, and 1¾ pints of butter-milk, the English average is only 4½ pints of new or 8¾ of skim. The following is a dietary written by a Border shepherd, followed by another from Stirling:—

Roxburgh

Breakfast.—1st (5.30 a.m.)—Oatmeal porridge or milk or oatmeal brose; 2nd—tea, flour scones or barley or loaf bread with a little cheese, butter, or jam. (On *Sundays*, fried ham, boiled eggs or fresh or kippered herrings.)

Dinner.—Kail or vegetable (lentil or pea or potato) soup, followed by potatoes and pork, sometimes beef or mutton. (*Sundays*, soup usually made with beef or bones, and semolina, cornflour, or rhubarb pudding, tarts or dumpling.)

Tea.—Bread and butter or jam, tea.

Supper.—Cup of new or skimmed milk (in winter, coffee), bread (often barley bread) and butter or jelly.

Stirling

Breakfast (6.45 a.m.).—Oatmeal porridge and skimmed milk followed by tea, home-made scones or loaf bread, and cheese or jelly. (On *Sundays* at 7.30, with ham and eggs.)

Dinner (12 noon).—Scotch broth or potato soup, followed by beef and potatoes with skimmed milk and bread.

Tea (3.30 p.m.).—On some farms tea and bread is sent out to the fields, but this is not general except in haytime or harvest.

Supper (6.30 p.m.).—Oatmeal porridge with tea and bread, the same as breakfast. (On *Sundays*, sometimes no porridge.)

To sum up, the rural resident knows that the labourer's wife's worries may be no greater than that of many a town family on £300 a year, that she has probably more leisure than the wife of the town labourer, that her house keeps itself cleaner than a house in town, that she is saved many town bothers, and that her household eats as sound food, if not sounder, than is consumed by those members of it who have gone to live in London and earn its vaunted wages, and that her boys and girls look and are healthier.

No doubt the food put on the table and in the men's bags is plainer than town fare, but it is eaten in healthier conditions than are usually experienced by the labourer turned townsman; and surely it does not need a physiologist to see that simple food, slowly eaten, and as often as not in the open air, is calculated to do the consumers of it as much good as a more complicated diet

bolted by wearied bodies in the bad atmosphere of London 'cawfee' houses and carters' 'pull-ups.'

The notion that the labourer's family, which goes to London to live, proceeds to devote a large proportion of its increased income to the promotion of physical efficiency is not likely to be entertained by those possessing a knowledge of the life of the labouring classes in London. It is not the grocer and butcher who benefit so much by the increased income as the landlords; the coal, fire-wood, and lamp-oil men, for light for sitting up late; the tailors, drapers, upholsterers, and venders of cheap jewellery; the 'halls' and theatres; the bus, tram, and train companies; those who arrange cheap excursions, beanfeasts, and social clubs; and last, but not least, the chemists.

Labourers' families in a cottage, like labourers' families in 8 House, 2 Court, Something or other Street, Old Kent Road, spend money on that which is not bread, and are badly in need of being taught that beer is not food, that all foods are not of equal value, and that it is folly to spend so freely on hats, dresses, and ornamental perambulators. But so are their betters!

A great agricultural authority once described a distinguished writer, who some years ago brought out a book on a rural problem, as 'seeing all things sharply and precisely, untempered by experience of the give and take, the compromise of things as they are'; and on no question is it easier for the townsman to think and write like a doctrinaire than on agricultural questions.

The fact that the white-faced labourers who were once 'on the land,' and are now pretending to enjoy, in a noisome London coffee house, a heavy meal of meat and greens, margarine-made tart, and beer, would turn up their noses at two-inch-and-a-half thick slices from a home-made loaf, a hunk of cheese or fat pork, and two raw onions, eaten slowly and with relish below a tree, does not prove that their fellows dining at that moment on such fare are starved. Those who have experimented with the bread, cheese, and onions know better. But even with an analyst's and a physiologist's report before him, many a townsman would hesitate to believe that such a dinner could be as wholesome and as attractive as it really is.

There is another direction in which the intelligent townsman does not grasp all the facts of cottage economy. That in some districts women work on the land he knows; but he does not understand the many ways in which cottage women and children may earn money, which, if small in amount, all adds to the net income of the household. The best opinion is, no doubt, that a man should have a large enough wage to keep his family out of his own earnings. Men's wages should not be depressed by the supplementary earnings of women and children. But in higher walks of life than that to which the labourer belongs is it not often customary for the wife to supplement, in effect if not in actual earned cash or in dividends, the income of her husband?

Returning to the situation in a hamlet I have in mind, at three cottages money is earned by killing and plucking poultry, not only for local consumption at the hall, the manor-house, the farm-houses, and other houses which are not cottages, but in larger numbers for the London market. At several other cottages there are women who do washing, ironing, and mangling, who go out cleaning, or who do sewing. Elsewhere

lives the 'howdy' or several 'howdies'. Then 'arrants' have to be run; many children have modest weekly contracts for errands. Three girls help the postmistress by acting as sub-letter-carriers.

Before Old Age Pensions came in, nearly all the old men and women—including not a few who still work—had been in receipt of club pensions since they were sixty. Those who had no such resource and were widowed, and had no son or daughter, occupied one of the almshouses, and a number of people were 'good to them' throughout the year. In one cottage, where there are three sons, all work; and one of them, like his father, is getting cattleman's wages. In the next cottage both the old people have pensions and still earn a little, and the son who lives with them is on full wages. In cottage number three there were six children, but the father's wages, more than those of the ordinary labourer, are supplemented by the earnings of three of the young people.

The weekly wage, not counting extras, in the hamlet of which I am speaking was, about the time the Mann and Wilson Fox Reports were issued, from 12s. to 13s. for men who had no charge of cattle, horses, or sheep

—they are now higher—and it may be thought could not well be lower; but how is it that when a horseman's girl was offered 1s. 6d. a week to fetch newspapers from the station each morning on her way to and from school—it would have entailed an additional walk of three-quarters of a mile at the outside—her parents refused it as not enough? How is it that much of the making of under and outer garments is put out? How is it that when the chapel wanted cleaning no woman could be got to undertake the job for two months? How is it that two new-comers who wanted their just-built cottage rough-cleaned had to go to the next parish for women to do it? How is it that no man on the three farms next my house now takes advantage of his master's permission to have field room for two rows of potatoes, though all the man, claiming such ground, has to do is to provide the seed and collect the crop, for the 'taters' are ploughed in and out by the farm team? How is it that every youth in the village, and almost every girl, who wants a bicycle possesses one? It is indeed rather significant that neither in the Mann nor the Wilson Fox budgets is there any mention whatever of bicycles, the

existence of which in large numbers in purely agricultural villages is well known.

Returning to the food question, one of the reasons why the townsman, be he of the working or the professional class, draws false conclusions from what he sees of the way in which cottagers live is that he lacks the experience of living on extremely narrow means which would enable him to form sound opinions. Neither he nor his womenkind have any notion of how to manage a home on £1 a week, much less on 16s. They do not think it possible; therefore, they argue, it is impossible. They are horrified, for example, at the idea of housekeeping into which only one fresh piece of butcher's meat may enter in a week, forgetting that more than half the population of the globe works hard without any butcher's meat at all. They attach some meaning or other to the word economy, but with the old-fashioned word frugality they are unacquainted. Now, the labourer's wife's housekeeping is only practicable because it is frugal. But that is not to say that it is necessarily poverty-stricken.

Apart from the boiled tea, superabundant beer—though some beer may have value,

when home-brewed, as a palatable accompaniment of a meal—and too much smoking and chewing of tobacco — all faults, let it be noted, of the townsman also—the thing that strikes me about the labourer's dietary is what must impress any patient investigator of Hodge's work, its wonderful adaptation, on the whole, to the circumstances of the case. Bread, cheese, salt pork, beans, onions, greens—the fare could hardly be chosen with a more intelligent regard for frugality and effectiveness. An old labourer I know, whose wages are never more than 13s. and extras, is accustomed, before starting out to work in the morning, to drink a large basin of gruel, made overnight, and warmed while he is dressing. It sounds like poor living, but what could be better for an elderly man, or cheaper. The gruel stays him till his eight o'clock breakfast time, when he has some bread and cheese and perhaps onions. At noon come bread, pork and onions. In the evening there is a hot dinner, into which more pork or the remains of Sunday's butcher's meat, with greens and potatoes and 'pudden,' or tea and bread and butter, enter. On Sundays, there is, of course, a more elaborate 'spread.'

When one reads over what one has written, however, it must be confessed that some of this chapter may wear the look of special pleading! It certainly makes out the best possible case. It is all true, no doubt; but is it all the truth? Perhaps not. Are heads of households likely to give a more unfavourable impression of the level of living in their cottages then they are compelled? Take, again, that Huntingdonshire dietary on page 140. Is a hard-working family entitled to no better fare? Does it offer sufficient possibilities of variation? And what can be the financial margin of people living in this meagre way? What are the possibilities open to them of improving their position by making savings towards a bit of land? What are the possibilities open to them of self-improvement? Can they, as their town fellows do, pay their way, without a sinking heart, to occasional entertainments, and easily send their dues to their trade organisation, if they had one? Can they afford to go on a week's or a fortnight's holiday, if they were allowed it? Could they buy a few books and take in a few papers, if they wanted to do so?

So long as these questions must be

answered in the negative, the case for a higher income for thousands of English labourers is made out.

During the present year Miss May Kendall and Mr Seebohm Rowntree have published, in *How the Labourer Lives*, some two-score new budgets of labourers' families in different parts of the country; and the conclusion of these investigators is that 'on the average the families are receiving not much more than three-fourths of the nourishment necessary for the maintenance of physical health.' Some critics will say that this conclusion shows the defects of the elaborately scientific method, and that it conflicts with common knowledge of the condition of things in typical rural families. On the other hand, can it be denied that visitors to the rural districts from America are often heard to express their astonishment at the number of wan faces and stunted figures among the children in the villages of Southern England, and to speak of the evident lack of vigour in many of the grown-ups? Undoubtedly there is under-feeding in many English villages; the general level of stamina in many places is not what it should be; there are far too many families with not enough money to

procure them satisfying conditions of life; there is starvation 'mentally and morally.' And that is a sufficiently grave state of things. But reformers are only making trouble for themselves in giving, however honestly, an exaggerated view of the situation, particularly in comparison with the situation in urban England.

Is there no under-feeding in our cities? How about the facts disclosed in *Life on a Pound a Week*? How about the statement of Mrs Sidney Webb that 'there are 2,560,000 adult males in regular employment earning less than 25s. a week and 4,240,000 earning less than 30s.?' Is there no emigration from Birmingham as well as Berkshire? And would not many young people in Birmingham who have not emigrated be doing better for themselves in more than a financial respect if they did emigrate? After all, the last census shows an increase in the rural population. If the increase is not actually, perhaps, so real as the statistics suggest, things seem to be improving. To hear some people, one might think that there were no prospects for anybody in rural England. Better wages, and the better feeding which ought to go along with better

wages, are wanted by thousands in rural as in urban England; but, even as things are, it may be well to remember that out of every 1000 children born in town and country, only 98 out of the rural 1000 die to 127 of the urban 1000.

Not a little writing about rural England is a blunt and most helpful statement of part of the truth. But it shows an imperfect realisation of the whole of the truth. Large bodies of the workers on the land—and off it—are underpaid and, as a consequence, underfed. There is no getting away from the scandal and horror of that. Part of the income of most labourers' families comes, we know, from the exertions of the wives and the elder children, and it is not fair that farmers should profit by this fact to pay lower wages than they would otherwise have to give. But is this state of things peculiar to the village? Are there not town families in which there are other earnings than the black-coated father's earnings? And, to be candid, whatever there may be to be said against this system, is it entirely without its morally serviceable side? Let us rid our minds of cant. Those who think they are going to solve the rural problem merely by

decreeing higher wages have no notion of the immensity of the problem they are tackling. The rural problem is many things besides a problem of wages.

Nevertheless it is well that the student of the problem should be continually haunted by the statements made by so painstaking a sociological investigator as Mr Rowntree, that a rural family of five 'whose total income does not exceed 20s. 6d. and whose rent is 2s. is living below the poverty line,' and that 'the wage paid by farmers to labourers is, in the vast majority of cases, insufficient to maintain a family of average size in a state merely of efficiency.' Even if these statements are held by some who have lived for many years all the year round in the country to go a little too far, that which remains absolutely true is distressing enough. No one can rest satisfied with a rural civilisation based on rates of pay which have to be eked out by home work, by the labour of wives and children, and by gifts, whether from relatives or the well-to-do, in clothing, coal, and cash; with a state of things which has the effect of keeping the rural worker out of touch with many fine things of life.

And when a considerable part of the

emigration from this country has been set down to causes which need excite no alarm, we know very well that, largely because of the advertising policy of the Colonial Governments in our rural districts, the agricultural emigration is excessive, in proportion to the limited population now remaining in the villages.

CHAPTER XV

HALF-HOLIDAYS AND WHOLE HOUSES

DURING the Lancashire farm labourers' strike the following sentence appeared in one of the newspaper reports: 'All the delegates reported that the men were looking forward light-heartedly to the expected stoppage as an interesting epoch in their lives *which would enable them to take their first holiday.*'

Why should the labourer be without the weekly half-holiday which every mechanic and artisan obtains? We all know that the work on the land and work among stock is peculiar to itself, and makes the giving of a regular half-day difficult, but I know that one large Southern farmer is considering a

half-holiday arrangement for his men, and he is a large dairy farmer. What he can do, other farmers can do. And why does not the Southern labourer, as a matter of course, get an after-harvest holiday, as his Scots fellow-worker does?

It is an easy matter to make out an overwhelming statement as to the difficulty of arranging holidays, half or otherwise, for farm hands; but farmers who argue that farm holidays are quite impossible need to be reminded of the Astronomer-Royal who demonstrated that the Crystal Palace would not stand, and of the other astronomer, whose works are still in demand, who proved that aeroplanes could never be made to fly!

Labourers' wives have more than once spoken to me about their men's lack of leisure. Said one: 'They haven't hardly time to do anything for their own selves. We know that it isn't easy to arrange for half-holidays on the land, but the men would manage among themselves to get the work done if they could all have in the week some half-day each. They'd be better men for themselves and for their employers. The masters would get more out of them than when their nose is always on the grindstone.

It's depressing, it is, and 'tis no wonder men go on the spree. Men worth anything would see the masters didn't lose. It's not only the men but us wives that gets down. My husband at home for half a day in the week would make all the difference to me and the children.'

Already the half-holiday has been conceded in many parts of Scotland. The men have no desire to be unreasonable as to holidays in harvest or hay time, or at any other period of pressure, but they say that when they continue working during times of stress they should be paid overtime. They object to the Hon. Neil Primrose's Bill because the half-holidays are at the option of the local authority. 'After the passing of this Act,' says the first clause, 'the local authority shall have power to appoint for farm servants working in the area of the local authority whole holidays, not exceeding four in number, and half-holidays commencing at noon, and not exceeding fifty-two in number, in any one year.'

Unfortunately the complaint of some labourers is not that they do not get holidays, but that they get too many! As to the demoralising system in many Southern

parishes, of quarter-days and broken weeks, of which there is piteous evidence every blustering morning, all that needs to be said, surely, is that if the farmers of the North, who have higher wages to pay and more broken weather to contend with, are able to pay wages rain or shine, the farmers of the South could, if they would, find a way of doing so also.

An old South country farmer, who has been most successful, though he rose from nothing, once said to me: 'If you press me about it, I can't understand how some farmers can turn off men upon a wet day. Some masters say they can't afford to give them work when it is wet. It is certain that the men cannot afford to lose their time. I would rather set a man to clear a barn of cobwebs than send him home. Sometimes I have set men to making scarecrows for the field, and it is wonderful how clever some of them are at it.'

Along with holidays, we may well talk of houses. Everybody knows how, because of the impossibility of building cottages at a remunerative rent, owing to the action of sanitary inspectors in closing cottages which formerly passed muster, and to week-enders and other new-comers to the country districts

occupying cottages, a dearth of dwellings has arisen. Some new cottages have been built, of course, but the number erected has been insufficient. The position of landowners is well known. A landowner who has built a few good cottages on his estate said to me: 'The cottage problem is purely an economic one. If the people could afford to pay 5 per cent. on the outlay necessary to build decent cottages, that is 3½ per cent. interest on capital, 1½ per cent. towards repairs, painting, and renewals, many landlords would erect more cottages on their estates. I have on my estate twenty-four brick, tile, and slate cottages. Practically these cottages pay no interest to the estate account on the original outlay. I therefore call these cottages charity cottages, and I do not think that I should be doing my duty to this estate if I were to erect any more cottages on such an unsound economic basis.'

It is an old story on which I have enlarged in a brochure entitled *In Search of a £150 Cottage*, which led to the holding of the first Cheap Cottage exhibition at Letchworth.

What is to be done?

On the one hand, the landlord says he cannot build. On the other, the farmer says

he ought to build, for it is he who benefits by the ownership of well-cottaged land. 'If in the opinion of a District Council there was a lack of cottages in any particular district, the Council should have power,' said a farmer reported in *The Times* the other day, 'to give the landlord notice to make up the deficiency.'

Plainly, a satisfactory wage would solve the housing difficulty in a sound way.

In order to help forward a beginning with rural housing, I am certainly prepared, because the need is so urgent and things have got so badly wrong, to make some sacrifice of strict financial principle. But I am old-fashioned enough to feel that, in the present constitution of society, it is not necessarily the business of public authorities to burden the rates with the cost of cottages if they are to be let at uneconomic rents to the employees of business men. What has been done in Ireland, in very special circumstances, is not necessarily good enough for us in England. Mr E. R. Pease has pointed out the distinction between the Boscawen scheme, which is to provide a State grant for part only of the annual loss on building schemes (a plan which tends to raise wages, because the local authority will aim at raising rents whenever

possible in order to escape any loss), and the Irish Acts, under which the State virtually provides 36 per cent. of the capital, free of interest, for ever, which tends to stereotype low wages for the benefit of the landowner and farmer.[1]

A man should have wages enough to be able to pay an economic rent. At a recent discussion at an Essex District Council on rural housing, the man who talked most common sense was a Tory politician, who asked: 'Why should I go on letting men have cottages at an unremunerative eighteen-pence a week simply because their masters won't pay them a sufficient wage?'

Surely Mr John Burns spoke to the point in his speech in the House of Commons on Mr Fletcher's Rural Cottages Bill:—

> Charity rents and subsidised cottages would be a bonus on low wages, and stereotype the present low wages of the agricultural labourer. Every landowner with whom he had discussed the problem—and many of them had done much better than their critics would lead the general public to believe—said that the extent to which they had subsidised their cottages had been used by their neighbours to depress the wages and standard of life of the man who had to get his cottage from other than a good

[1] Incidentally, it may be mentioned that some of the Irish cottages have been too expensive. Think of cottages containing three rooms in all costing up to £211 each!

landlord. The Rural Housing Association, the best authority on rural housing, said that the financial difficulty in the way of increasing the supply of country cottages arose in large measure from the inadequacy of the wages of agricultural labourers, and that the policy of a State grant would merely tinker with the present system while leaving the real cause untouched. The National Labour Land and Home League declare that the payment of a legal minimum wage was urgently needed, and would be the most effective means of improving rural housing.

It is not anything like as well known as it ought to be, that the local authorities have considerable power. If there are not enough cottages in a district, the District Council has power to build them. The Parish Council can requisition the District Council on the subject, and, if there is inattention, can complain to the County Council, and eventually the Local Government Board. In the course of two years, the President of the Local Government Board has sanctioned the expenditure of £187,000 on rural housing on economic terms by District Councils. Under the existing law, Mr Burns asserts, the housing problem is 'being met increasingly well every day.' Two District Councils alone are now building in 34 parishes.

The balance payable out of the rates by the building experiments of District Councils

has not been a great matter, for the cottages can be built on the outskirts of a market town and are therefore occupied by artisans who can pay a fair rent because they receive fair wages. The strain on the housing accommodation in the villages is relieved by the increase of urban accommodation. In the official return of July, 1912, concerning 315 houses, built in 34 parishes, the annual expenditure, including the loan charges, was £3519 and the estimated annual income £3435, so the loss to be made up out of rates was only £84 in all!

There can be no doubt that cottages are increasing, if slowly, in some of the rural districts. Mr Burns says there were, in 1911, 130,000 more houses under a rent of £15.

It should be added that the number of cottages taken by week-enders is usually exaggerated. After all, in the vast majority of rural parishes, there are not many more strangers than there have always been. People who do not want to tackle the cottage problem in earnest find the week-ender a handy whipping-boy.

What can be done by a District Council in a case where it is necessary to build for

labourers is shown in the following particulars of the building scheme carried out by the Erpingham Council at Edgefield, Norfolk. The Council bought by compulsion twelve acres of land for £410, and built on it six cottages for £1000. The inclusive interest and repayment of capital amount to £56 a year. Rates, taxes, tithe, insurance, repairs, and contingencies are £71. From this £16 10s. is deducted for rent of surplus land, and £42 is charged for rent, with a deficiency of £12 10s. to come from the rates.

The houses have three bedrooms measuring 12½ ft. by 10 ft., 12 ft. by 8 ft., and 9 ft. by 7¼ ft. Below is a parlour 11½ ft. by 10 ft., a kitchen 15½ ft. by 12 ft., with a small pantry. Adjoining is a coal-shed, wash-house, etc., with concrete paths; and each pair stands on an acre of ground.

The Marquis of Salisbury's agent gives the following particulars of pairs of labourers' cottages near Hatfield and no great distance from the station: 'They are two-story cottages, the walls built of brick. They are 36 ft. frontage and 22 ft. 3 in. deep, equal to the covering area of 801 super feet, and each cottage has a detached fuel-house and earth-closet. Each cottage contains a living-room,

scullery, pantry, and three bedrooms. The contract price was £300 per pair, and included all materials and labour and rail carriage and cartage—practically complete ready for occupation. In addition a well and pump cost £15, fencing and gates £15, drains, earth-closets, and cesspool £10, forming footpaths and sundries £6, making the total outlay £346, or £173 per cottage.'

Mr Thomas Potter, secretary of the Society of Clerks of the Works, who writes on the subject as a practical man of great experience, says:—

'If the Government were to provide standardised plans of cottages with two and three bedrooms respectively and bills of quantities to enable country builders to estimate for their erection, and in addition say what the State will advance on such cottages at a low rate of interest, say 2 per cent., and for a sinking fund extending over, say, fifty years, the difficulty should be solved. The real cost for almost any locality could be ascertained within a small margin, based on the bill of quantities, except that of cartage and railway carriage, which would vary in every case. If the Government provided the amount, leaving the owner to provide the

land, do his own haulage, and pay the railway carriage of materials, it would be found, I submit, that a rent of 2s. 6d. a week would in many cases pay interest and sinking fund. It should be a condition that no portion of the advances should be allowed to find their way to the pockets, either directly or indirectly, of those who may consider they should have a finger in the pie, except so far as seeing that the cottages were built according to the plans, and that the specified materials were as described and of good quality.'

Students of the subject are familiar with the plan of Mr Potter's cottages of brick or concrete containing living-room 13 ft. 9 in. by 12 ft., bedroom 13 ft. 6 in. by 8 ft. 9 in., two bedrooms 10 ft. by 8 ft. 3 in., with scullery, wash-house, and out-houses. The cost, he says, is '£300 a pair, exclusive of cartage, railway carriage, and water supply, all of which would amount in many cases to an inconsiderable sum.' Mr St Loe Strachey has lately been exhibiting to the Press a five-roomed cottage built on his land in Surrey at a cost of £150, the value of the land not being counted. The rent is 2s. 6d. or £7 10s. a year and rates,

so that there is a return to the landlord of 4½ per cent.

There is not only the grievance of insufficient cottages and bad cottages, but of tied cottages. It may be said, no doubt, that if the squire can have cottages for his own servants it seems reasonable that the farmers should have cottages for theirs. But experience all over the country seems to have shown conclusively that it is not fair to the labourer to give his master the hold over him which he possesses in being able to turn him out of his cottage at a fortnight's notice. There are cases, however, in which labourers have preferred to be tenants of the farmer rather than tenants of the landowner, because they were liable to be thrown out of their cottages if they did not vote the landowner's colour at election time. But such cases are rare nowadays. On the whole there is probably most to be said for the system under which the labourer has his cottage direct from the landowner.

Mr Runciman has outlined a plan for building 10,000 cottages by the State. His idea is to reduce the cost by obtaining the fittings, that is, the doors, fire-places, window-frames, etc., in one purchase. He proposes not only

cottages, but a piece of ground with each one, sufficient to enable the occupants to grow all the food they have time to produce. By obtaining the land at agricultural value—and a number of representative landowners have offered land for cottages at agricultural value—and by making all the economies in building he outlines, the President of the Board of Agriculture believes that the cottages and their bits of land could be let at 3s. a week without loss to the State. It will certainly be extremely interesting to see the constructional, financial, and administrative details of this plan for cottages which shall not only pay their way, but make the occupants free of the control of both farmer and landowner. Obviously, if the thing can be properly done—Mr Runciman speaks of the 10,000 cottages being built next year—there need be no reason for not proceeding from the 10,000 cottages to the 90,000 which the President has in mind, and the labourers of England would be placed, as a result, in an immensely stronger position as wage bargainers. But many people who have studied the rural housing problem most closely will be afraid that Mr Runciman has overlooked some difficulties. Let us hope,

however, that the Board of Agriculture does see its way on sound lines. In the meantime there can be no reason why attention should not be concentrated on considering practicable methods of raising wages, for even 3s. a week is more than many labourers are paying in rent or can afford to pay.

Meantime there is one point, made by Lord Lansdowne in a recent speech, which is well worth making before closing a discussion on the housing question, and that is that it is not true, as most townsmen seem to suppose, that there are no labourers' cottages but those which belong to the landlord or his dependants.

Rural Cottages and Buildings for Small Holdings. Wyman. 1913.

Our Village Homes. By HUGH ARONSON. Murby. 1913.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BIT OF LAND

MANY townsmen who approach the study of the rural problem have a rooted misconception of which they must get rid if they are to make sound progress. This is that

people should be taken 'back to the land.' Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman spoke of the colonisation of our own country, and a few years ago a book was published, called, I think, *The Colonisation of Scotland.* What comes into the minds of many people when such home colonisation is spoken of is some system by which workers in the towns may be transferred to the rural districts. During the last few years a considerable section of the reading public has realised the hopelessness of such a plan as a means of bringing about any substantial change for the better in the towns or the rural districts. But not a few intelligent people who have no rural experience have still an impression that it is a practical proposition to plant out Londoners and other town dwellers in considerable numbers in the country.

It is not a matter on which there is any longer room for theorising. The experiment of home colonisation has been tried several times. Sometimes it is pleaded that the places chosen for the experiment have been on too heavy soil and too far from the railway; but it is possible to make allowance for such factors in judging the results. Roughly, what has happened is that, for every back-to-

the-lander who has succeeded, a dozen have failed; and this is what might naturally be expected.

The working of the land is a highly technical business which the countryman begins to learn insensibly as soon as he is breeched. It is no exaggeration at all to say that a labourer's sharp boy of twelve would be more use about a farm-house than a town boy of eighteen. The villager, by the time he reaches man's estate, knows a great deal more than he is given credit for; but most of it he has never consciously acquired. The leeway which a townsman coming into the country to work has to make up is so great that ordinarily he never does make it up, and so he never gains that natural acquaintance with the management and idiosyncrasies of stock, and with weather and soil conditions, and the way they re-act on one another and on the crops and the cleanliness of the land, that is the countryman's possession. Briefly, a townsman small holder and a rural small holder can never start on anything like the same footing.

And once they enter upon their small-holding career, the countryman born and bred has the advantage all the time. Few

townsmen understand, for example, how much of the financial success of the rural small holder is due not to what he makes but to what he does not spend. The rural small holder not only goes to work at all times on a more economical basis than his townsman rival; he knows the people with whom he has to deal, in the matter of the employment of labour, for instance, as only a fellow-countryman can know them. In this direction the townsman makes the most deplorable miscalculations. Then, again, there is the turning of what is produced into money. It is a big job to produce the right stuff at the right time and in the right way, but it is an entirely fresh job to get rid of it at the best price. Here again the countryman is likely to score, though his schooling may have been poor and his notion of keeping accounts may be elementary.

Some townsmen who have corresponded with me with a view to taking a small holding have pleaded that it would be enough if they could pay their way. Even if it were not a highly debatable proposition whether they would succeed in doing even that, their life could hardly be all they reckoned on. For to whatever extent a family may

live off its holding, the necessaries of life, other than those produced directly from the land, are, when all reductions are made, so numerous and so relatively dear nowadays that the smallest household must make a considerable cash expenditure in the year. And if Robinson Crusoeing would suit the small holder and his wife, it would not enable them to start their children in the world as they would like to do. People who entertain the idea that it is possible for townsmen to come down to the country districts and, with a trifling capital, proceed to make a living, do not seem to ask themselves the common-sense question how it is, if success in rural industry is so easily attained, that country people who have been working the land all their lives, with their fathers and grandfathers before them doing the same, have not more money through their hands.

Unquestionably, what draws on so many people to hopeless schemes of small holding or poultry farming, or the like, is the occasional success of the exceptional man. It is almost impossible to prevent the exceptional man being successful, and it matters very little what kind of business it is he takes up,

for his curious combination of sound health, great energy, industry, perseverance, and high natural ability gives him advantages which must keep him conspicuous among his fellows. The successful townsman turned countryman is almost invariably a person who would have been equally successful in half a dozen lines of life. Alas! for two would-be countrymen who are outstanding men, there are two score who are without the abilities they believe themselves to possess. It must be very few townspeople who have the capital and the indomitableness to train themselves to the business of small holding so as to be able to produce the right things in the right place at the right time and sell them at the right price; and when these exceptional mortals do succeed, it may well be questioned whether the same amount of capital and the same amount of time and ability devoted to an urban calling might not have procured better financial results.

No doubt it would be a very good thing if plenty of town families could be planted out in the country. Though rural life is not without its drawbacks—I will even add its dark side—it is a great thing to be able to live and work in the country. Every year

a certain number of exceptionally circumstanced townspeople who move to the country manage to get a footing there. Mrs Wilkins's book and my own notebooks record cases in which townspeople have forced a way for themselves in rural industry. But these cases are not numerous enough to be other than exceptional, and they offer no evidence for believing that anything worthy to be described as the colonisation of rural England is coming about in this fashion. The way effectively to colonise Great Britain is to retain in the rural districts the people who are there already. This can be done by providing a more tolerable, a more satisfying rural life. From a material point of view there must be sufficient wages, adequate housing, and a proper access to the land for those who can make good use of it.

All instructed and patriotic people are in favour of small holdings, in suitable conditions. The success of small holdings depends, first, on soil and climate; second, on the small holder; third, on economic conditions.

On the heavy corn-growing lands of Essex, for example, it is very difficult indeed to make a small holding answer, for the land can

only be worked after the same manner as large holdings, and the small holder has to do without many of the advantages enjoyed by the large man. At home or abroad one finds that small holders who have not the opportunities or the faculties to devote themselves to market growing have often a hard struggle. Generally speaking — and there must be a qualification in regard to almost everything that is said about small holdings —a small holding is successful because the land is more intensively worked than the land of a large holding.

It can only be intensively worked when it is of such a nature that the occupier is seldom kept from working it by reason of its stickiness. It is not only the soil but the aspect which matters. I remember travelling in the West of England and noticing that the ground was covered with hoar-frost. Shortly afterwards we passed through a tunnel. There was no frost on that side of the hill, and the country was cut up into small holdings. The explanation was that it was an earlier district than the country on the other side of the hill. Earliness is one of the reasons why Evesham and Cornwall are good districts for the small holder.

Of course, there are all sorts of small holdings. In some districts the right thing for the small holder is not a cultivated holding at all, but a grass holding. Then it must be remembered that the small holder is in a favourable economic position when he has land not only suitable for the purpose to which he is applying it, but so situated that he can buy and sell co-operatively. The popular idea that a man can nowadays take a small bit of land anywhere and make a living is absolutely fallacious. Every rural trade, particularly the market grower's trade, the milk trade, and the pig trade, has become highly organised. A man can live off his holding to a considerable extent, no doubt, but he can make no progress merely by existing. Few people can have written more appreciatively of successful small holding at home and abroad than I have, but we have to be careful not to encourage unsuccessful small holding. There are some districts suitable for small holdings where there might be more of them, but there are other districts where an advance in the direction of small holdings can only be made cautiously. In districts particularly suitable for small holdings, small holdings are numerous and

flourishing. In such places there is a tradition of small holding. The man from a district without this tradition, who contemplates taking land, needs to be very sure of himself indeed.

The most hopeful district in which to encourage small holdings is a district of small holdings in which more land is needed for sons of small holders to set up for themselves. In many districts, however, at home and abroad, one sees the small holder's sons and daughters only too ready to get away to the town for what they believe will be an easier as well as a more cheerful life. A type of small holder who succeeds is the intelligent labourer who is started by the local landlord (or a County Council) with, it may be, five acres of grass and the addition of a little out-house to his cottage to serve as a dairy. Such a man keeps on working for wages while his wife and family run the holding, with his assistance on an occasional off-day or in the evenings. In course of time he has laid by sufficient to undertake a twenty-acre holding, and to give up working for others, except, perhaps, occasionally or in the winter. Finally, the twenty-acre man may find himself in a position to take an ordinary farm.

The first thing a student of the extremely complicated small holdings question should do is to ask himself why there are large groups of small holdings in some parts of the country and none in others. A popular explanation that it is the landowners who are responsible is surely too easy to be accurate. No doubt some landowners have acted in a way which is a lasting discredit to them. Ordinarily, however, landowners may be trusted to follow their interests, and land let in small parcels usually brings in a larger income than land let in large areas. Primarily, the existence or non-existence of small holdings is a matter of geography, particularly physical geography.

A common statement that England is a country of large farms is a little sweeping. Of the 374,809 holdings in England and Wales, 81,884 are under five acres and 168,038 between five and fifty acres. The number between fifty and three hundred acres is 110,657. Some 14,230 are over three hundred acres. Last year's figures (published in 1913) show 175 fewer three hundred acre holdings. Largely owing to small plots round towns being built on, there is a decrease of 550 in the one to five acre holdings. But

there are 782 more holdings between five and fifty acres, and 519 more between fifty and three hundred acres. In seven years 628 farms of over three hundred acres disappeared. During the same period there were over 1000 more fifty to three hundred acre holdings, over 2000 more five to fifty acre holdings, and more than 600 one to five acre holdings.

In seven years, it is important to note, the number of occupiers of land in England has increased by 3313. As during that period the farmed area of the kingdom has decreased by 231,000 acres, which means that a great many holdings have been extinguished, 'a net increase of the number of holdings into which agricultural land is divided is,' as the Board of Agriculture's Return says, 'the more significant.'

About a quarter of the whole farmed area of the country is in farms over three hundred acres. Some sixty per cent. is in farms between fifty and three hundred acres. Small holdings, which form more than two-thirds of the occupations, account for a little more than fifteen per cent. of the agricultural land of the kingdom. There is, needless to say, a great difference between counties.

Thus in Wiltshire more than half the holdings are of more than three hundred acres. On the other hand, in Wales (with the exception of one county), in Cheshire, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Lancashire, and Monmouth not more than ten per cent., and in Lancashire and half the Welsh counties less than five per cent. of the land is taken up by large farms.

During the past five years, under the Small Holdings Act of 1907, some 154,977 acres have been acquired by the County Councils for small holdings. Approximately, the Act has provided land for 15,176 applicants. Last year about 4000 persons and thirteen associations asked for land—only sixty-nine of them desired to purchase—and just over half of the persons applying and eight of the associations were provisionally approved as suitable. Owing to the efficient administration of the Act in Norfolk there was a largely increased demand for small holdings in that county.

The last official report notes that there is no indication of an increasing desire to purchase holdings instead of leasing them, that co-operation among small holders is most necessary, and that the men must not

be placed on too little land. It concludes, and what it says is well worth bearing in mind :—

> Speaking generally, it is impossible to doubt that the Act has proved of signal benefit to the rural population. Some mistakes have been made, and there is room for much improvement in the use that is made of the land provided for small holdings. The profits obtained at present ought to be considerably increased, and there is no reason why this should not be done if proper advantage is taken of the increased facilities for agricultural education which are now available.
>
> But in spite of shortcomings in this direction a large number of deserving men have been established on holdings; the stream of migration from the rural districts, both to the large urban centres and to the Colonies, has been checked; the continuous decrease in the number of small holdings in the country has been converted into a small but steady increase; there have been very few failures in spite of the somewhat unfavourable seasons; and many of the tenants are so well satisfied with the terms and conditions of their tenancies that they are anxious to increase the size of their holdings as soon as possible. These are all signs of satisfactory progress, and with the increasing tendency on the part of County Councils and of private landowners to co-operate in assisting the small holdings movement, there is every hope of even greater progress in the future.

Mr Runciman stated in July that 20,000 acres would be provided in the near future, and that there were demands for another 150,000 acres.

Mr R. H. Rew, the well-known Secretary of the Statistical Department of the Board of Agriculture, in a paper of great value read

to the Farmers' Club this year, said, in discussing the future of English farming, that 'it may be that production of the maximum output at the minimum cost will cease to be the chief end in view, and that the maintenance of the maximum number of men on the land, even at some sacrifice of economic theory, may be regarded as a higher object.' Criticising a statement by an eminent agricultural authority, quoted elsewhere in this book, that 'it is the better ideal to be able to manage a farm with two men per hundred acres minding machines and earning 30s. per week than with ten men digging or its equivalent at 10s. per week each,' Mr Rew suggested that 'it may be a still better ideal—from the social if not the economic point of view—to employ on the same area more men and fewer machines. It may be that individualist farming as a system has passed its zenith, and that there will be a reversion, under widely different circumstances and in a greatly altered form, to the communal system from which it was slowly developed.'

Small Holdings. By L. JEBB (MRS WILKINS.) Murray. 1907.
Small Holdings: Annual Report. Eyre & Spottiswoode. 1913.
Small Holdings. By JAMES LONG. Collins. 1913.

CHAPTER XVIII

TO OWN OR TO RENT?

GETTING people on the land means, in practial politics, providing country people, who want to work land as their own masters, with that land either as tenants or owners.

Tenancy or ownership, which shall it be? If ever there was a question for the profitable consideration of which it is necessary to put aside the predispositions of the politicians, here we have it. Most of us must undoubtedly start with a predisposition in favour of ownership. There is the satisfaction of owning land, there is the independence and the incentive that ownership gives in the management of land, there is the social consideration which comes with the absolute ownership of the smallest patch of earth. I am not the only writer on agricultural subjects who was originally disposed to think that the ownership of land was a thing to press for in writing about rural regeneration.

The more practically the problem is considered, however, the more one comes to realise that, while there is everything to say

for ownership in natural conditions, and we might well have a considerable extension of ownership in this country, security of tenure rather than actual ownership is what the man who is working land for a living really looks for. He must regard the matter wholly, or almost wholly, from a commercial point of view. He requires to be able to deal with the land as freely as if he owned it; but if he can have that power, at a reasonable expenditure, and can hold the land practically as long as it is to his commercial advantage to do so, it does not really matter much whether he is the actual proprietor or not.

Indeed, there is a great drawback to being proprietor. He may use his capital largely in providing the purchase price of the land and partly in working it, or he can use his capital wholly in working it. If he can do as well without locking up his capital in purchasing, it is plainly the better course for him to hire. The mistake that many people make in giving an opinion on this subject is in looking at it from a sentimental or æsthetic point of view, and not, as the farmer must do, from a commercial point of view.

There is a great deal to be said for ownership in respect of the satisfaction gained from

working one's own land; but a farmer holds land primarily for the financial return, and not for sentiment or landscape, and the time may come when it is a disadvantage to him to be under a pecuniary or sentimental inducement to remain in the occupation of a particular holding when, all things considered, he would be doing better elsewhere. Against Arthur Young's 'magic of property,' which leads a man to make special exertions when he is on his own land, must be set, first, the value of being able to move freely away when it becomes commercially advantageous to do so, and, in the second place, the experience of thousands that it is possible to feel pride in rented land and to do everything for that land that ought to be done to it. It is very easy for those who are not practically acquainted with the working of the land to idealise ownership.

This tendency is particularly unfortunate in considering the case of small holders. Some people talk of small holders as if they were a special class of people. As a general rule they are nothing of the sort. Most of them are small holders only because they lack the capital or the opportunity to be large holders. They hope one day to be large

holders. This being so, it is uneconomical for them to tie themselves any tighter than is necessary to their small holdings.

Let us look for a moment into an actual small holdings district. We see that here the first upward step taken by the labourer is to get a cottage with five acres of grass land attached to it. To such cottages the squire has added buildings for cows and calves, and a suitable dairy. The labourer pays the rent of the cottage plus five per cent. interest on the cost of the additional buildings, plus the agricultural rent of the land. His wife and children run the holding, and he keeps on working for a farmer for a weekly wage. Occasionally he gets a day off to get in his hay or do other work, for which his wife needs his assistance. But practically the holding is run by the wife. How she gets time for it is her own problem.

When the day comes that, through the exertions of the wife, £50 or £60 have been got together—there is always the possibility of a relative dying and leaving a small sum or money's worth—the cottage small holder on five acres is a candidate for a larger holding. The landlord, or some other landlord, or the County Council, has holdings about forty acres.

On one of these a man will be able to work all the time or nearly all the time for himself. Again with his wife's invaluable assistance.

When fortune has smiled upon the efforts of the pair on forty acres, they step up another rung of the social ladder and take a holding in an acreage of three figures, and are farmers pure and simple.

Plainly, it would be disastrous to the rising man to be handicapped by ownership.

Some one has written that if there is such a thing as 'the magic of property,' there is another thing called 'the demon of property.' May not too great sacrifices be made for the right to call land actually the occupier's own? Look at France and Belgium for illustrations of how far peasants may be carried by the lust for land. To rate the peasant for his failing in this respect may not come well, of course, from people with greater possessions than he has, but it is necessary to look at ownership through the spectacles of Zola as well as of Mr Jesse Collings, if an all-round view of the subject is to be obtained.

But, it may be said, agriculture is flourishing on the Continent, and see how ownership prevails. In the first place we are in England, not on the Continent. Mr Johnson, in his

Disappearance of the Small Landowner, has written with much force: 'The small owner has survived [in England] where the circumstances were favourable. His disappearance has been due not so much to artificial as to natural circumstances, but the circumstances, political, social, and economical, have, since the seventeenth century, been against him. The political, and to some extent the social, have altered, but the economical remains the same.' Mr Prothero has said: 'Reduce population one-half, revive domestic industries'—no one believes in that as a commercial proposition—'return commons and wastes to their former barrenness'—the Parish Councils, with powers to purchase commons, have, in twenty years, done practically nothing—'make the farmer independent of manufactures'—he must be increasingly dependent on manufactures—'and the peasant proprietor may thrive.' Mr Johnson adds: 'If he has Protection,' though Holland, half of the land of which is worked by the owners, is a Free Trade country.

But what is the situation on the Continent? The small man does not flourish all over France, and the late break-up of the manorial system in France had, no doubt, a good deal

to do with his persistence elsewhere in that country. As a matter of fact, it is reported that the number of the peasant proprietors is decreasing; while, according to the report of a recent congress, the 'depopulation of the rural districts grows more serious yearly.'[1]

After studying the subject in Holland and Denmark, I am inclined to think that, in some references to the Continental aspect of the ownership versus tenancy problem, there is a tendency to underestimate, first, the extent to which the survival of ownership is due to conditions existing or formerly existing in particular countries; and in the second place, the difficulties of bringing about, by legislation, a large increase of ownership where tenancy has come to be customary.

Those who quote Denmark as so conspicuous in the number of its occupying owners, forget, as Lord Graham has pointed out, the fact of mortgages over the farms. It would be fairer, perhaps, to call them credit loans, and it should be remembered that, as long as interest is paid, they cannot be called in. But the Danish small holdings have, I was told, credit loans to half their value.

[1] See also Mr Pratt's *Transition in Agriculture*.

Lord Graham certainly does well to point out what townsmen easily forget, 'that agriculture in our climate is at best an uncertain industry.' Looking at the matter from the point of view of the labouring classes with little money, he 'cannot help feeling them to be right if they prefer (as I am sure they both do and will) to cultivate the land devoid of fresh risks—to bear those ills they have rather than fly to others that they know not of. It is all very well for a man with plenty of means to think of ownership, but a man without such plenty would be far better advised to become a tenant under some well-regulated scheme of tenure. And the men we have chiefly in mind in connection with this policy of small holdings are the labourers whose sole asset is their brawny arms—an asset which remains good only so long as Heaven blesses them with health and strength. To own the acres one tills is a sentimental pleasure which only the comparatively rich can afford to enjoy. If the poor man falls ill, if he has a succession of bad seasons, or if he experiences domestic or business trouble, he stands to lose all.'

But the argument for ownership comes not only from Holland and Denmark, but from

Ireland and America. A Liberal who advocates tenancy may be thus addressed :—

'You Liberals object to the Unionist plea for giving the cultivators of the soil the ownership of the land they work, and yet you have only to come to Ireland to see Government agencies working day and night, as it were, in making tenants into owners. £185,000,000 are to be spent to give the Irish farmers possession of their holdings. What a political party it is that is ardently for occupying ownership in Ireland, and resolutely against it in England! Could political inconsistency go further? Again, talk with Americans or read their agricultural papers, and you will only come across denunciation of tenancy. There is nothing on which the American rural reformer is keener than on turning tenants into owners. In the United States every agriculturist worth his salt wants to own, not to go on renting, his land. How can you pretend that what is good for Ireland and America is bad for England?'

Which is only one more illustration of the truth that many people have never got into their heads a basic fact about agriculture—that rural conditions are never precisely alike in two countries, and that what is the right

thing in one country is not necessarily the right thing in another. Until people do understand once and for all that the agricultural problem of a country is its own agricultural problem and no other country's, that it is impossible from the experience of one country to dogmatise about what is needed in another, they must be liable to be drawn hither and thither by every wind of doctrine.

But how can what is politically, socially, and agriculturally right in Ireland and the United States be wrong in England?

To begin with, it is not wrong at all. It is only unnecessary. That, however, is enough. Politics might be described as the science of not doing unnecessary things. To answer the question why ownership is an unnecessary agricultural ideal in England one must first ask for the reason why men occupy agricultural land. Not land in general, let us understand, but agricultural land. Land in general may be occupied for æsthetic or sentimental reasons, or as a speculation, or because it is convenient to occupy it. But the farmer pure and simple occupies land for one reason only, as has been said already—to make a living out of it. If he cannot make

a living out of land in Ayrshire or Cheshire, then, as is well known, he occupies land in Essex, or he emigrates. What are the conditions, beyond the possession of skill and the prevalence of good seasons, in which land can be farmed to a profit? The conditions are a reasonable rent, reasonable security of tenure, and a reasonable opportunity of enjoying the advantages which follow from working the land properly. Obviously, these conditions are equally existent under a just system of tenancy and under absolute ownership. Although a few improvements may no doubt be made in the system of tenancy which prevails in England, it may be fairly described as a just system. Consequently most of the agricultural land in England is held by tenancy. On the whole, our rents are fair, and our system of compensation for improvements, as provided in part by the law of the land, and for the rest by the 'custom of the county,' makes it, or, with some extension of the Agricultural Holdings Acts, will shortly make it, an unprofitable business for a landlord to disturb a tenant who is a good farmer and an honest man.

The farmer goes on renting, not only because he is reasonably well treated by his

landlord, but because it is more economical to rent than to own. A farmer cannot well have too much capital. But very many farmers have to make the most of what they have. One way in which they are very glad to make the most of their capital is in not having to lay out a large proportion of it in buying the freehold of the land they occupy. So long as landlords are content with the low percentage they commonly receive on their investments in land, few agriculturists are inclined to become landlords in their place. The landlord receives, perhaps, 3½ per cent. or it may only be 2 per cent.; the farmer makes 5, 10, or 15 per cent. As the farmer finds himself with savings, he invests them, not in buying land but in renting more. For sentimental reasons he may, possibly, in favourable circumstances, buy the freehold of the farm on which he lives, but all the other land which, as he prospers, he proceeds to occupy he is well content to rent. And so it is that in England to-day, and in Holland to-day for the matter of that, it is not at all difficult to come upon farmers who hire land which they and their forbears have rented for a period which goes back further than most of our peerages.

The businesslike farmer pays rent for his farm as his town cousin pays rent for his office or warehouse. When, because he is doing well, he wants a larger farm, he is free to take another, just as his urban relative, as he gets on, is free to rent a different office or warehouse. Both countryman and townsman are also able to leave their landlord in the lurch if he tries to overreach them. Some people's business faculties are devoted to owning land or city offices, other people's to working land or doing business in city offices. Ownership of anything has always some advantages, but ownership which may mean locking up needed capital or selling at a disadvantage, as requirements may change, has drawbacks.

Why does the Irish farmer prefer ownership? Simply because his experience as a tenant has been so bitter for centuries that he cannot yet conceive of a tenancy system under which he is likely to be free to obtain his due share of the profits of his work. He and his have lived in Ireland, not England. It is not a question on which he is open to argument. Only, he believes, by securing the absolute freehold of his holding will he have his rights. His landlord, he says, is an

alien landlord, a landlord whose interests have always conflicted, and will always conflict, with his. In the nature of things it is impossible, he says, to look for justice from Irish landlords. The farmer in Ireland, he is certain, must own his land. And there it is. There was a deadlock—the State had to step in. Ireland is Ireland, and England is England.

It will be interesting to see what happens when a number of those who have taken over land in Ireland have passed away. Their successors on the holdings will have to raise money in order to divide the value of the holdings with the other heirs. Will they unduly burden themselves by borrowing? Such things have happened abroad.

In Scotland, where the feeling against the landlords did not go the length of making their tenants shoot them, we find one who has closely watched the administration of the Small Holdings Act in Scotland saying :—

'A tenant of a farm of some size here and there may possibly prefer to buy his holding, but the mass of the small men do not want to be peasant proprietors. They know better.

They have now in Scotland fair rents and security of tenure, and a revision of rent by the Land Court every seven years, so that to the fullest extent the tenant gets the benefit of his own improvements.'

That is it: security of tenure is for all practical purposes as good as ownership, and it does not lock up capital which can be usefully expended on the holding by men who want to do their best by the land they occupy. Some tenants under the Highland Congested Districts Board, after having taken land as owners, have asked the Board to let them become rent-paying tenants instead, and the Board has agreed.

As to the United States, Americans have repeatedly assured me that there is across the Atlantic little or no community of interest between landlord and tenant, such as exists in England. There is, as a general rule, in America no system of compensation for improvements, and, truth to tell, the tenant does not make many. The landlord is a robber of the tenant; the tenant is a robber of the land. But what has such a state of things to do with us in England, where, whether a politician is for ownership or for tenancy, he must admit, if he is an honest

man, that thousands of acres of land are to be found under tenancy where a standard of farming has been reached which is not bettered anywhere in the world?

CHAPTER XIX

WHAT HOLLAND, DENMARK AND BELGIUM HAVE TO TEACH US

So many references are made in the discussion of the question of small holdings to the situation on the Continent, that it may be worth while to turn aside and note, as well as we are able, what the situation there really is.

Let us first take Holland, a political and social laboratory of which, as I have argued for years, we might well make more use than we do. It is, of course, an interesting sensation to be in a country in which the people who rent or own the land in areas of 500 acres and more number about two dozen, and the total number of holdings over 250 acres is just 216!

A small holding is defined by our Small Holdings Act as less than 50 acres. The

number of holdings in the Netherlands from 2½ acres to 50 acres is 182,011 out of a total of 209,302. If the lowest unit of the tables were not 2½ acres, that is, a hectare, and areas of between an acre and 2½ acres could be taken into account, the result would show an even more remarkable preponderance of small holdings. Any visitor to the Netherlands can see that the number of holdings below 2½ acres is very large indeed. As a matter of fact, half the horticultural holdings in the kingdom are between half an acre and 2½ acres.

Of the 182,011 holdings of between 2½ and 50 acres, more than half are owned by the men who work them. Taking the whole 205,811 holdings between 2½ acres and 125 acres, the same is true. Indeed, more than half of the land of the country is *geexploiteerd door den eigenaar*—worked by the owner.

Undoubtedly one of the causes of Dutch agricultural prosperity is the prevalence of small holdings, and not only small holdings, but small holdings on which the cultivators have had in so many instances—not in the case of owned lands only—a free hand. Rural Holland came through the bad years more easily because the land was in the hands not

of a few but of many. Education, co-operation, and intense culture have made greater headway for the same reason. And the immense rise in production is an obvious result of small holdings.

In the year 1904 there were 18,000 more holdings between 2½ acres and a dozen acres in area devoted to market produce than there were in 1888, and during the years since 1904 the increase in the number of the smallest class of holdings has continued in the areas particularly suitable for subdivision. In some districts there will soon be nothing but small holdings!

Although the well-equipped student knows that there have been some drawbacks to the increase of small holdings in the Netherlands, the advantages which have accrued are plain, and legislation is pending to help forward small holdings still further. Facts in support of every *cliché* which has been used in Great Britain in setting out the case for small holdings are forthcoming in Holland. Need I note any other fact than that, though in our own country we have had the rural exodus, in Holland there is the spectacle of a growing population in the villages?

The 1899 census showed that, while, for

every 100 persons in communes of more than 20,000 inhabitants in 1830, there were in 1899 some 265 persons, the rural population had nevertheless risen from 100 to 169. This happy state of things is due in no small measure to the opportunities the country people have had of bettering themselves. I was impressed in several districts by the number of farmers and horticulturists who had once been labourers.

Possibly the extent to which business men in the cities and towns have their homes in the country may have some effect in maintaining the numbers of the rural population. But it must also be remembered that Holland contains a number of large towns.

In some provinces the advance since 1888 in the number of the smallest holdings—that is, areas between 2½ to 12½ acres—has been quite startling. In Groningen it has been 86 per cent., in Zeeland 95 per cent., in Drenthe 99 per cent., in South Holland 108 per cent., and in Friesland 132 per cent.!

As to holdings between 12½ and 25 acres, in Drenthe there are 3234 where in 1888 there were but 1942, in Friesland 3083 where there were 1788, in Zeeland 1358 where there were 943. In the two southern provinces, for

11,168 holdings of from 2½ to 12½ acres in Limburg in 1888 there are now 14,431, and in North Brabant for 13,978 some 16,028. In Gelderland about 23,000 out of 36,000 holdings do not exceed 12½ acres. In Utrecht only seven people occupy more than 250 acres, in Drenthe only five, and in Friesland only three.

He would be ill-advised, I think, who would press Dutch rural statistics into rash advocacy of ownership rather than tenancy. Although half the holdings in the country are owned by their occupiers, the proportion in 1888 was not 50 per cent., as it is to-day, but 58 per cent. Except in the case of the largest holdings of all, the percentage of ownership is smaller in every description of holding from 2½ acres up to 250. In Zeeland, where small holdings between 2½ and 25 acres have so substantially increased, the percentage of ownership for the whole province is only 26 per cent. against 40 per cent. in 1888. In North Brabant, where of the whole 32,000 holdings 26,000 are less than 25 acres, the fall in ownership percentage since 1888 is from 68 per cent. to 50 per cent. There is also a fall in Limburg, where the proportion of small holdings is equally remarkable, 14,000 out of

a total of 20,000. How useless it is to dogmatise on such a difficult subject as that of small holdings without a close acquaintance with local conditions and requirements is illustrated by the fact that whereas in Groningen the proportion of holdings owned by their occupants is 65 per cent., in the adjoining province of Friesland the proportion is only 85 per cent.

The law forbidding a father to settle all his land on his eldest son has helped forward small farmers and intensive farming. I have a note of 30 cwt. of superphosphate, 20 cwt. of kainit, and 6 cwt. of nitrate being used per acre in Groningen on farms where there were no cattle. I have also heard of Westland market gardeners putting on cow dung to the value of £23 10s. an acre. A German authority has said that the production per acre is greater in Holland than in any other European country. He goes on to argue, however, that the farmers do not earn enough. My impression is that he is too sweeping in his conclusion. But it is only elementary students of rural problems who believe that the subdivision of land must necessarily be advantageous. Many little farms in Holland are too small.

When we come to Denmark, the outstanding fact is that it is a country which has never had a feudal system, as we understand a feudal system, and a country in which the area of peasant land has been very large for centuries. Some of this peasant land was owned and some of it was let, but it was equally peasant land, and law and custom prevented the alienation of it. The Danish monarchs found it worth while to have the peasants at their back in their struggle with the upper classes and the clergy.

Six centuries ago a law was passed making it illegal for the privileged classes to buy the peasant freeholders' land. Even before that it had been enacted that peasant land could not be sold until it had been offered in public to the relatives of the holder. Laws are made to be broken, and these laws were broken, but the old legislation has undoubtedly exercised a powerful influence. Denmark has survived because there were laws which were passed in the interests of the peasants.

Four hundred years ago, for example, it was enacted that land should be let for the whole lifetime of the tenant. There was an ingoing to pay on taking a holding, but the

rent could not be changed. Again, it is still the Danish law that the widow of a tenant retains possession of her husband's farm even if she marries again. Then there is the famous law prohibiting the merging of the peasant farms in estates. When Lord Carrington, as he then was, put up Crown properties for sale to small holders he had been forestalled by a Danish king of the eighteenth century.

As to loans to small holders in order that they might be able to buy their farms, I have formerly noted that such loans might be obtained in Denmark at the very time that the small holder and poet, Robert Burns, at his wits' end for money, was contemplating emigration to America. Legislation favourable to the peasants has continued up to our own time. It is some time ago since the freehold of the land occupied by the State and by the University of Copenhagen, which was worked by peasants, was offered to them on easy terms. A series of Acts have enabled landowners to dispose of their land to their tenants. A network of land credit companies has also played an important part in the reconstruction of rural Denmark.

In Denmark a man may own as many

farms as he likes, but there must be a farm-house and a family on every one of them. People have been fined because they lived on one farm with their cows and used a second holding to run young stock on. The subdivision of land is sanctioned, but it must not be reduced below about 25 acres, that is, it must be capable of bearing taxation equal to the value of a sack of corn. There is a kind of copyhold lease which makes a large number of peasants practically proprietors.

The law of 1899 providing loans for agricultural labourers who want to obtain holdings disposes of a sum ten times the amount of the King's Civil List! In every district there is a committee, on which the Minister of Agriculture has a nominee, which helps a man to find land who cannot get hold of it himself. The man has to have capital to the amount of a tenth of the land, buildings, stock, and implements he requires. If buildings and stock are approved, a State loan of nine-tenths of the total expenditure may be granted. The maximum sum is £220. The holding must not be above 11 acres of poor quality land nor above 7 acres of average quality.

What is the result of the centuries' old system of land holding in Denmark and of

the different laws which have been passed in the interests of small holdings? The answer is that, whereas there were 128,000 holdings in Denmark when Queen Victoria came to the throne, the number is now about 290,000.

Between 1873 and 1905, farms from 96 acres to 288 acres decreased from 30,000 to 27,000, while those from 24 acres to 96 acres increased from 42,000 to 47,000. As to still smaller holdings, the number from 6 to 24 acres grew from 66,000 to 69,000; of from ¾ acre to 6 acres, from 39,000 to 51,900; of less than ¾ of an acre, from 26,000 to 62,000.

So that with the opening of the new century the 8¾ million acres of the country were divided thus:—

800 farms averaging 1250 acres.

76,000 averaging 90 acres.

33,000 about 15 acres and upwards.

60,000 between 3 and 15 acres.

80,000 holdings of less than 3 acres.

There are only about 34,000 cottages in the country without land.

Now as to the matter of tenancy and ownership. In 1905 there were 289,000 holdings. As many as 260,000 of them were freehold. The situation is even more striking than it seems to be, for while a large number

of farms are rented for a rotation or two rotations, some are on long terms, it may be for fifty years or for the life of the holder and his wife. Here is an interesting table:—

Holdings	Freehold	Life tenancy	Leased or Let	Held by Civil Servants
Over 12 acres	84·8	4·2	8·3	2·7
1⅓ acres to 12 acres	79	7·3	10·3	3·3

He, however, who would draw the conclusion that, because so many Danish small holdings have come to be owned by the men who work them—it is necessarily the case that ownership is a better practical plan just now for the small holder or farmer in Great Britain—plainly overlooks the natural development of the system in Denmark, and the great difference not only between the history of England and Denmark, but between the agricultural situation in the two countries.

With Belgium I have not so close a personal acquaintance as with Holland and Denmark, but we may turn with some confidence to Mr Rowntree's painstaking *Land and Labour: Lessons from Belgium.* 'Is Belgium,' he asks, 'a country of peasant proprietors or only of peasant cultivators? The question is soon

answered. Seventy-two per cent. of the total holdings are cultivated by tenants, and only twenty-eight per cent. by owners. If we take the area of the land, we find that two-thirds of the cultivable land is cultivated by tenants and one-third by owners. A much smaller area of Belgian soil is cultivated by owners than is the case in France, Germany, or Denmark. Only about one-third is cultivated in Belgium. The proportion rises to nearly nine-tenths in Germany and Denmark, and to nearly one-half in France. In Great Britain only twelve per cent. is cultivated by owners.'

Is ownership increasing in Belgium? No, answers Mr Rowntree. 'Although Belgium is a country of small holders, it is becoming less than formerly a country of peasant proprietors.'

Do owners work their land better than renters? 'On the whole,' is the reply, 'land cultivated by owners is somewhat better cultivated.' But Mr Rowntree hastens to say that 'the difference is not striking, especially if it be remembered that the Belgian law gives no compensation to tenants who quit their farms for any improvements they may have effected, or for unexhausted manure in the ground; and that although

this condition of things is mitigated by customs of old standing, these only obtain over one-third of the country, and only compensate for a certain class of improvements. In the remaining part of the country an outgoing tenant is entirely dependent upon the goodwill of his landlord, or upon the bargain he may be able to make with the incoming tenant. The Belgian facts contradict Arthur Young's saying, "Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock and he will turn it into a garden; give him a nine year's lease of a garden and he will convert it into a desert." After very carefully investigating the facts and travelling through all the agricultural districts of Belgium in company with men of great agricultural experience, the writer feels that the advantages which ownership gives, compared with tenancy, are unimportant, if reasonable security of tenure and adequate compensation for improvements can be provided for tenants.'

Mr Rowntree concludes: 'Belgian experience shows that it would be quite possible to have a country consisting almost entirely of peasant proprietors, obliged to work unreasonably hard to maintain a comparatively low standard of comfort. We cannot hope,

then, materially to improve the lot of the small agriculturist by the mere creation of a class of peasant proprietors.'

FOR HOLLAND: *A Free Farmer in a Free State: A Study of Rural Life and Industry and Agricultural Politics in an Agricultural Country.* By 'HOME COUNTIES.' Heinemann. 1912.

FOR DENMARK: *Rural Denmark and its Lessons.* By SIR H. RIDER-HAGGARD. Longmans. 1912.

FOR BELGIUM: *Land and Labour: Lessons from Belgium.* By B. SEEBOHM ROWNTREE. Longmans. 1911.

CHAPTER XX

SOME TRUTHS ABOUT LANDOWNING

I AM not acquainted with any landowner who is getting more than 3½ per cent., or 4 per cent. at the outside, from the farmers who have land from him. I recently went over the carefully kept accounts of an estate that is specially favoured as regards natural quality of land, cultivation, condition of houses and buildings, water supply, and markets; and I found that the net return shows 2 per cent. on the capital value of the estate, estimated according to the way land is selling in the district. No instructed person believes that

the owner of a large estate gets more than about 3 per cent., and it is frequently less. It is not so much fear of Mr Lloyd George as the desire to get better returns on their capital which has caused so many landowners to put estates in the market of late. The high prices they have obtained show that there are plenty of people who believe that the decent landowner has little to fear from any Government, and that land will usually fetch its value.

'The decent landowner.' The writer of the informing 'Pilgrimage of British Farming' in *The Times* has well said that much is expected of him. 'The locality considers it has a claim on him, and is not shy of pressing it; yet he has no longer any power or political influence other than that which any man of means may win by his personality, and if he is threatened with some of the odium attaching to the owner of improving urban land, and generally given to understand that he ought to be taxed out of existence, small wonder that he thinks of transferring his capital into more remunerative securities burdened neither with responsibilities nor reproaches.'

As to the landlord's commercial relations with his tenants, it is common knowledge in

the rural districts, if not in the towns, that much land is let below its competitive value; and that many landlords allow other considerations than the strictly commercial to influence them in the letting of their farms. It is not often that one hears it seriously contended that in England many tenants are rack-rented. Farmers are now fairly well protected by compensation for disturbance, and there is, in fact, the keenest competition for farms all over the country.

It may be an anachronism that certain persons should own immense tracts of land and give up so much of it to sport; it may be against enlightened public policy for crops to be reduced in value by the incursions of game; and the system of dependence which great estates induce may be socially objectionable. But it is not often that the tenants of game-preserving landlords feel that they are too highly rented, while as to the 'dependants' of great houses, every one who has looked about him in rural England knows that, as a general rule—there are exceptions—the conditions of life on a great estate are often better than on a small one. It takes a great deal to make up for the lack of a feeling of independence, but it is only honest to admit that on great

estates there are usually more than average opportunities of 'rising,' and the cottages and homesteads are well built and are kept in good order. Not long ago one landlord demonstrated to me from his books that 10s. out of every sovereign he took in rent he laid out in repairs and improvements. The other half-sovereign and more was spent in the district with local shopkeepers.

But it is an autocracy successful beyond the average of human nature that is better than freedom! It is no wonder, therefore, that there should be a desire that farmers and small holders should be able to get upon land that they themselves own.

Agriculture, in the case of a large farmer and of a small one alike, is, however, as has been seen, a business, and a business in which a man is engaging who has only a limited capital. Why should he lock up capital in buying land when he can rent, at a return of, say, only 4 per cent. to the owner, and then have all his capital free for the working and stocking of the farm? It must be remembered that the purchase value of good agricultural land, improved as it has been through the centuries, is often high. It must also be borne in mind that the go-ahead farmer

increasingly needs ample capital in order to march with the times.

As a matter of fact, thousands of farmers are very reluctant to buy their farms, and only do so when the landowner is selling, and there is a chance that some tenants may be dispossessed by the new owner when their leases expire. Except for this risk of sale by the landowner, an English farmer, who farms skilfully and conscientiously, is practically sure of retaining the farm he works all his life; and the same may be said as to his sons and grandsons, if they are equally efficient. There are, as everybody knows, plenty of tenant farmers in England whose families have farmed the same land for generations. I know one man who has farmed contentedly for forty years on a six months' notice arrangement.

In the case of a small holder, it is particularly desirable, as I have contended, that he should be a lease-holder and not a free-holder. He has no capital to spare for buying his land, and if he does well, he soon wants a larger farm. A farmer, large or small, can never tell whether he will be needing the same size of farm twenty years hence. All sorts of things may happen. A small farmer who had bought

his farm and wanted to sell might easily find a special difficulty in selling advantageously.

One argument for ownership as against tenancy has certainly force—the sense of personal freedom under ownership. The complaint from many rural districts is not that enough is not done for them, but that they lack the freedom to do what they would like to do for themselves. In very few villages is there the same sense of personal freedom that is experienced in towns.

There does not seem to be so much to be said, however, for another point, that the man who owns his land is a particularly valuable barrier against that vague thing, 'social revolution.' The rejoinder is that, just as the man who rents land, in such favourable conditions as land is ordinarily rented in England nowadays, usually works it as well as if he owned it, so also the man who rents land usually has the same cautious political opinions as the man who owns land. Some of the pleas heard in England for ownership as against tenancy are made by those who are really more afraid of Mr Fels and the land 'nationalisers' than enamoured of the ownership system on its merits.

It is a pity that the question of ownership

versus tenancy should have become a party question. It is a complicated and technical question upon which, when all is said, it is unwise to generalise too freely. It is a question which must finally be examined in the light of local and personal circumstances.

When we come to the special question of the relations of landlord and tenant, if it is to be contended that agriculturists, as a class, have substantial grievances against landlords, the fact that farmers, who are much more a newspaper-reading class than they used to be, continue to a large extent —in England, at anyrate—steadily to vote with their landlords, needs some getting over! There is also the fact that thousands of farmers are content to rent their farms by the year.

It is to be regretted that the townsman is not better acquainted with the compensation for improvements system under the Agricultural Holdings Acts, which, if they do not yet perfectly protect the tenant in every particular, are an undoubted triumph for justice and enlightened common sense in the relations of landlord and tenant. It has been contended for some time that the tenant is insufficiently recompensed for a long period

of good farming. Some landlords might, no doubt, do more than they do to insist on a high standard of farming. But from some recent discussions of the subject, it is plain that the difficulty of framing a system of rewards for the best farming which shall be equitable to landlord and farmer alike is no light one.

When it is not a question of general farming, but of fruit-growing or market-gardening or the production of highly cultivated and extremely valuable crops such as hops, it is easy to see that a tenant who has to leave his holding by the act of his landlord may suffer a heavy loss. Such a case does not often occur, for good tenants are seldom disturbed. But the families of such tenants may suffer somewhat in the event of the determination of the tenancies by death. The landlord's case is that he is not actually responsible for such a costly crop as fruit, that there is a considerable element of speculation in such cropping, and that he cannot fairly be expected to share in the risks of a business venture in which he is not directly concerned. At a recent gathering of the Farmers' Club, a strong case was made out by several speakers in favour of the more general

adoption of Evesham custom, under which a tenant who wishes to realise his interest finds the incoming tenant himself, and strikes his bargain for tenant right with him direct. The objection is that most landowners, at any rate those with no personal acquaintance with the working of Evesham custom, like to have a free hand in the selection of their tenants. Rent is not the only factor which weighs with them.

As more land is put under fruit and other more intensive crops than corn, the problem of a more perfect arrangement between landlord and tenant will be pressed forward; but in general farming the tenant is now amazingly well protected in comparison with the state of things a quarter of a century ago. Few townsmen have any notion of the kind of compensation bill a tenant is nowadays entitled to present to his landlord if he is unreasonably disturbed. This is not to say, however, that existing legislation is not capable of improvement, or that Scots experience of Land Courts is not well worth careful study.

We come back to the fact that farmers, as a class, except when alarmed by the prospect of having, owing to a change of ownership, to

leave farms which they value from a business and personal point of view, show no great desire either to sink their capital or to carry a burdensome mortgage in emancipating themselves from landlordism by securing the freehold of their land. Most of them are very sorry when the old estates are broken up. The faults of landlords have been proclaimed, but there are few districts in which there are not stories of worthy farmers, and even the relatively worthy, being helped over bad times by the owners of the land. Farmers share to some degree in the social consideration shown to the hall and the mansion, and they deplore the departure of old families who had a perfect knowledge of their districts. It is a generation before the new owners get a real hold on the regard of the countryside.

Farmers are also well aware that only a part of the relation of the good landlords to their estates is on a business basis. Agriculturists, as a class, undoubtedly resent the way in which the position of the landowner has been misrepresented in print, in cartoons, and on some platforms. They feel that, whatever the shortcomings of their landlords, they have a better understanding of rural conditions than some of their critics. They feel

that the landlords are often as much misunderstood in the Press as the farmers themselves and their labourers. They feel that townspeople have no right impression of the actual lives, work, and feelings of landlords, farmers, or labourers. The Farmers' Union movement represents, among other things, a real desire to see some rural districts represented in Parliament by men who are well acquainted with rural life and industry. But, speaking generally, it may be said, as Mr Hall has written, that 'amongst the farmers themselves there is no land question, no smouldering feeling, nor general current of opinion that calls for a "policy"; in the main they would ask to be let alone.' This is certainly true of England as a whole.

In no direction have many townspeople given themselves away more freely to their country critics than in what some of them have said and written about large and small holdings.

First, as to small holdings. It is easy to see how urban people have been led astray. They see the tremendous immigration into the towns from the villages. They have some impression of the way in which, in past times, the countryman has been

dispossessed of his commons and his bit of cultivable land. They are struck by the high proportion of small holdings on the Continent, but do not understand exactly how they come to exist. Then they have an *idealised* view of rural life, agriculture generally, and the working of a small holding. They are enthusiasts for small culture for more reasons than one, but one of them undoubtedly is that they have never bent their backs to it themselves. As the country girl says in one of Synge's plays, 'It's great love the like o' them have to talk of work.' 'Great love surely,' rejoins the man she is talking with.

It is intolerable that there should be in any district a legitimate unsatisfied demand for small holdings. On the other hand, an enormous amount of nonsense has been written and spoken on the subject.

Except in districts particularly suitable for small holdings, the number of ordinary farm hands qualified for small holdings must be, for a considerable time, limited. Many of the small holdings which have been acquired under recent legislation have been acquired by tradesmen, small dealers, and others, that is in order to be worked by people who have

other means of livelihood. It is no doubt well that such people should be able to get land if they can turn it to good account. But the demand for land from non-labourers should not be put before the public as a demand from genuine farm hands, eager to work land on their own account instead of under masters.

And the uninstructed public should not be left in doubt as to the moderate return from and the heavy labour entailed by small holdings in other than specially favoured districts. The talk about the intrinsic value of small holdings has been overdone. They are merely a means to an end. In districts where there is market-growing, for example, men may be content with small holdings, but a very large number of small holders are, as has been said already, merely men on the way to be large holders, if circumstances favour them.

Large farming has been the subject of some ignorant abuse. Men of brains and skill will not be content with small holdings. And it is well that they should not. Those who best know small holdings areas abroad, know that they are not always ideal communities. There is a very great deal to be said for the English

system of big farms and little farms. They are the complement of one another. There are characteristics of the small farmer which are admirable, socially and commercially, but there are characteristics of the large farmer which are admirable socially and commercially also.

The last has not been heard of large farming in this country. Skilful and capitalised, it has gone far and may go farther. We may have joint-stock farming yet. Some prophecies as to what steam might achieve in farming have not been fulfilled, but this may be accounted for to some extent. The petrol motor, electricity, and the light farm railway may have a future before them in our time. At the present moment really competent large-scale farming, with properly remunerated labour, shows great possibilities. It may be that when agriculture has got over its fright, as urban industry has done, at the notion of labour organising itself, and has developed itself along the lines to which the best practical experience and the latest science are pointing, it may be able to offer monetary inducements to its workers which they will have difficulty in bettering by occupying a few acres of land of their own. In many rural

districts, especially in Scotland, good labour is already at a premium.

As to the financial success of small holdings, the writer of *The Times* 'Pilgrimage', after three years' wanderings in which to inform himself, wrote: 'Of course small holding communities are going to be taught to co-operate, instructors of various arts are being planted among them with a view of increasing their productive capacity; but all these aids cost money to the State as a whole if not to the small holdings, and the larger occupier who has had to give up his land may well object that he at least was paying his way without any such crutches.' Some people who have written and spoken about small holdings seem to have underestimated the great value to the nation of so arranging things that the agricultural labourer can be given to understand that, in the future, the land is actually open to those who can work it; that all who are qualified to gain a livelihood as their own masters on a small area can obtain it. On the other hand, it is equally true that the net financial gain to some districts from a provision of small holdings has been overrated. The extent to which the small holder, if he is unable to work his holding intensively, is

handicapped in competition with all the resources of the larger holder, is quite imperfectly realised. The advantage to the community of successful small holding is so substantial that there is no reason whatever why the uneconomic character of struggling small holding should not be plainly stated.

It is difficult to write in this way, of course, without exposing oneself to a charge of lack of sympathy with small holdings, and of unwillingness to provide all who willwith a chance of making their way on the land. If space permitted, some account might well have been given of the triumphant progress of small men in the Fens, and in such districts as that round about Evesham. But it is surely common knowledge how, on specially suitable land, men have wrought financial wonders on five or ten acres. There has been nothing more encouraging in recent agricultural history than the transformation of large districts in Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire, and in Norfolk also, by the enlightened indomitableness of the small holder. But the general reader, to whom chiefly these pages are offered, easily runs away with the idea that changes wrought in particular parts of the country can necessarily be repeated

elsewhere, and it is important to press home the point that, however important it may be to have as extensive a system of small holdings as it is possible to establish in this country, large farming must have the leading place in Great Britain.

The whole subject of small and large holdings has its moral and intellectual, as well as its commercial side, and it must be considered all round in the light of actual experience here and abroad. It is unfortunately the case that many people who write and talk on the subject of small holdings are under the dominion of theories which they have had no opportunity of testing against actual facts in the rural districts of England and the Continent. As to the non-commercial aspect of the subject, what some enthusiasts of small holdings who are harsh critics of our present rural system, ought to be asked is, Do they consider that the moral condition of the average English village is inferior to the moral condition of the average French or Belgian village?

CHAPTER XXI

THE FARMER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HIS LABOURERS

On the large dairy farms at Terling, near Witham, in Essex, which the Hon. Edward Strutt manages, with such widely-recognised success, for his brother, Lord Rayleigh—Lord Rayleigh's milk-shops have been well known in London for some years—there was started twenty years ago a system of paying annual bonuses to the men, whenever the financial results of the year's farming seemed to justify the adoption of such a course. Except in the six years of extraordinary depression, the 'derelict Essex' period, the bonuses have been regularly paid, and the total sum received by the staff amounts to something like £10,000. About the same time an old-age pension scheme, which at the time of the introduction of national old age pensions had more than £2500 to its credit, was begun.

In addition to these admirable schemes there was set going four years ago a plan of

co-partnership, of which too little has been heard. The method adopted in the case of the bonuses was to place the money to the men's credit in Post Office Savings Bank accounts, which were, of course, entirely under their control. The co-partnership scheme provided that the bonuses might be put, at the option of each beneficiary, either into the Post Office or into the capital of the farms themselves, there to receive interest at 4 per cent., or as much more as the dividend on the farming operations of the year might amount to. It is evidence of the complete success of the scheme that the bonuses are no longer to be transferred to Post Office Savings Bank accounts, but are all to go into the farms. They will, of course, continue to be as easily removable by the investors as if they had been placed to their credit in Savings Bank books. The number of men receiving the bonus this year is about two hundred. This includes all workers who earn wages over 7s. a week. The bonus ranges from 10s. in the case of boys up to 30s., £2, £4, and even £10 where men and bailiffs are concerned. Probably some fifty of the men will prefer to draw their bonuses. This leaves about 150 employees who will have money invested in

the farms on which they work. The total sum is between three and four thousand pounds. Men may invest their own savings as well as their bonuses, but they are not allowed to put in the money of their relatives or friends, for, needless to say, the farms have no need of additional capital.

It is of the essence of the scheme that secrecy should be preserved as to the exact amounts which the men have invested; but by indicating the different shareholders by numbers I am able to give in the following table a statement of the amounts to the credit of 75 men as typical of the whole 150 :—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
1	5	5	10	19	37	19	1
2	86	16	9	20	4	8	7
3	42	19	9	21	40	11	10
4	12	16	4	22	33	17	5
5	22	13	1	23	92	3	6
6	11	18	2	24	44	2	9
7	14	5	2	25	37	14	2
8	6	16	3	26	10	4	0
9	69	11	3	27	13	0	7
10	2	18	6	28	19	16	1
11	2	9	10	29	71	17	10
12	4	14	0	30	78	0	0
13	2	18	0	31	13	8	7
14	3	10	5	32	11	10	2
15	7	4	11	33	15	0	11
16	7	1	1	34	4	1	6
17	1	2	1	35	4	1	6
18	7	11	7	36	6	6	9

	£	s.	d.
37 . .	4	14	0
38 . .	19	8	0
39 . .	32	6	8
40 . .	6	15	4
41 . .	3	10	6
42 . .	2	18	0
43 . .	7	1	1
44 . .	4	14	0
45 . .	1	13	1
46 . .	7	18	10
47 . .	12	2	1
48 . .	6	15	4
49 . .	9	0	4
50 . .	1	13	1
51 . .	32	19	4
52 . .	26	15	0
53 . .	60	4	7
54 . .	5	17	7
55 . .	78	14	5
56 . .	218	1	5

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however, do leave the farms. The impressive thing at Terling is not so much the various schemes which have been put in operation for the men's benefit—philanthropic agencies are numerous on many estates—as the results which have been obtained from these schemes. The village is full of young men. They are fond of going up to London when they can, but few of them seek work there. The man on the land gets a chance on the Rayleigh farms. He begins life with a better schooling than is common in many villages; and when he goes to work he has, owing to the enlightened system under which the estate is managed, an opportunity of improving himself. But it is not all work; there can be few villages where more varied recreation is obtainable than at Terling. Lady Rayleigh's club, in a public-house the licence of which has been extinguished, is one of the ameliorative influences at work. It is evidence of the spirit of the young fellows that in so small a place as many as twenty-seven are Territorials. Things go forward as happily as they do not merely because the men are fairly treated financially, but because they know that those for whom they work are really interested in their welfare. There is a kind of board meeting of heads of

departments every week, at which suggestions from any one on the estate are welcomed; and everything is done, by sharing in recreation as well as in work, to promote good feeling and to get different grades of men to exchange ideas. A visitor at the annual dinner to the men cannot but be struck by their bearing. Most of them have the alert look of the best kind of mechanics.

Two years ago Messrs Hasler and Clapham, corn and coal merchants at Dunmow, Essex, introduced a co-partnership scheme on their 600 acres. At the end of the first year, after crediting the staff with their bonuses and paying out all withdrawals, the firm found itself with more than £550 of its men's money on deposit. The following is a list of the bonuses in the case of farm hands, the amount of annual wages being stated in brackets after the bonuses:—£4 1s. 7d. (£48); £5 0s. 4d. (£59); £4 6s. 9d. (£51); £4 1s. 7d. (£48); £3 18s. 8d. (£46); £4 5s. (£50); £4 5s. (£50); £4 1s. 7d. (£48); £4 (£47); £3 18s. 3d. (£46); £4 1s. 7d. (£48); £4 6s. 9d. (£51); £3 14s. 9d. (£44); £3 16s. 6d. (£45); £3 6s. 3d. (£39); £3 13s. 1d. (£43); £1 19s. (£23); £1 17s. 5d. (£22); £3 9s. 9d. (£41); £2 0s. 10d. (£24); and £4 11s. 10d. (£54).

It is interesting to notice how much above the reputed wages of Essex labourers are several of the totals of annual payments. Where the totals are £20 odd the recipients are lads. The plan of co-partnership is that, after 5 per cent. has been paid on the capital of the firm and on the deposits of the men, the profits are divided *pro rata* between the principals and the men according to the proportions of capital invested and the annual amount of wages paid treated as capital. The accounts of the firm are audited for the purposes of the co-partnership by an accountant at a distance.

How far it is practicable to develop agricultural co-partnership is an interesting problem. In Mr Strutt's hands, and in the hands of Messrs Hasler and Clapham, co-partnership seems to have led to more willing service, to a greater readiness to accept new methods, and, on the part of some of the men at least, to a greater interest in their work.

The only difficulty in the way of co-partnership from the point of view of agriculturists is that it is not every farmer who can afford to let his neighbours know what return he is getting on his money. A difficulty in the way of the men is, perhaps, that they may be

uncertain as to the attitude which will be taken up by the advocates of co-partnership towards agricultural trade unionism.

I am in favour of co-partnership plus trade unionism. Co-partnership is plainly a step in the right direction, but it would be unworthy of support if it were going to be used in order to discourage trade unionism. It is easy to conceive how co-partnership could be used to disparage and thwart trade unionism and common action on the part of the workers. The men working for good masters, who had a bonus and co-partnership system in operation, could be easily made to feel that trade unionism had little to offer them. That might even be true, but such an attitude overlooks the responsibility they should feel to fellow-workers under masters who do not sufficiently remunerate their men. It also hinders the growth of the feeling of comradeship and co-operation which trade unionism is intended to promote quite as much as higher wages.

The weakness of agricultural co-partnership is that it is likely to be put into operation by good masters only; that it rests to a considerable degree on a bonus system which is the voluntary gift of the employer; that, up to now at any rate, it has not apparently looked

forward to representation of the employed in the conduct of the business in which they are financially interested; and that, as I have said, it is possible to exploit it for anti-trade union advocacy, and to use it as a lever to hinder that common action on the part of the men which is the right and duty of every body of workers from labourers to authors.

Profit Sharing and Co-partnership. By A. R. Pease. Fabian Society. 1913.

IV. POLITICS

CHAPTER XXII

POLITICS AND COMMON SENSE

In the last chapter but one an attempt has been made to do justice to landlords as a class. As a class they are not all that they might be. What class is? But expectations of them necessarily bear some relation to the privileges they have enjoyed. Some years ago Sir Horace Plunkett made an appeal to Irish landlords to take their place at the head of the movement for rural regeneration, although they had parted with most of their land. There has been a response to the appeal. Mr Prothero, in closing his survey of the history of English farming, makes a similar appeal to English landlords, although they are still in possession of most of their land. 'For many years,' as he points out, 'landowners as a class took a most active part in politics and conducted the whole administrative work of rural districts. To-day as

a class they have ceased to bear the burden of municipal life, or undergo the drudgery of local administration. Their influence has dwindled to a vanishing point. Where individual members of the class retain it they exercise it as men rather than as landowners. Yet leadership is still open to those who care to earn it. Up to 1899, landlords were the pioneers of improvement. Transference of responsibility upon private persons has undoubtedly borne excellent fruit. It is an acknowledgment by landlords of their partial defeat, a tacit admission that our land system can no longer supply the capital and direction required.'

Mr Prothero, who, it will be remembered, is a duke's agent, goes on gravely to point out that 'private property in land is not so exceptional in its nature as to make its tenure legally assailable, but the moral title deeds by which some of it is held are not historically without a flaw. The possession of land has for hundreds of years been honourably associated with the unpaid discharge of laborious public duties. If this association of service with privilege should be in any way weakened, substance and colour would be given to the allegation that landowners

are a parasitic growth that should be eradicated.' In Mr Prothero's opinion, 'much ought to be done that is left undone to put land to its most profitable use.' That it is not done, 'is only to say that the modern system of farming has broken down in one of its most essential features.'

A writer of the great authority of Mr A. D. Hall comes to very much the same conclusion in *The Times*: 'If we consider the men who are engaged in this business of agriculture, we must conclude that the owners, however kindly and helpful to their tenants, are yet deficient in leadership. There is nowadays no one to set beside Coke of Norfolk or the landowners who did pioneering work in the second quarter of the nineteenth century; almost the only working interest they take in agriculture is the breeding of pedigree stock, and that rather as a form of social competition than for the improvement of farming. The great opportunities of leadership they might exercise in the way of drawing their tenants into co-operative marketing and purchase, or improved methods of farming, are rarely or never exercised; at their worst landlords become merely rent receivers, and must inevitably

become crowded out unless they take some higher view of their function.'

A development of the present situation is likely to be a reduction of the holdings of many large landowners. The glories of unlimited land owning have gone, and only in December the President of the Surveyors' Institution, who is a peer's son and a farmer on a large scale, assured its members that 'apart from districts where there are moors and forests, it is difficult to see, from the landowner's point of view, what object there is in owning more than 5000 acres.'

And here may be added two more sentences from Mr Hall's findings: 'There remains the last but distant alternative—ownership by the State or other permanent corporation, of which we will only record that we have always found the Crown, the colleges, and other similar bodies spoken of as good landlords; their estates are well cultivated and their people prosperous. The disintegration of the historic estates must come under economic pressure, but the process will be a slow one, and we doubt if there is any case for interference.' Has Mr Lloyd George said so much more than that? One is moved to add one more count to Mr

Hall's and Mr Prothero's indictment of the landowning class. It is that landowners, and those who regard themselves as their particular friends, have surely been ill-advised in losing the opportunity of recognising the good faith of those who have been moved to call in question the essential rightness of the existing land system. Whatever may be thought about the views of those who are ranged against landlords, have they not been as wildly caricatured as the landlords themselves have ever been caricatured by any body of land reformers from the towns? Any such wilful misunderstanding of their critics by the landowning body is the more regrettable because these critics must always labour under the disadvantage in controversy of knowing at first hand infinitely less about agriculture and the management of land than those who are directly associated with it.

What is the terrible Lloyd Georgian gospel which, from much speaking and writing, might almost be supposed to be the end of individual right in rural England, which is to drive those who love our shires to expatriation on the Continent, or at least to the Colonies, which is to bring to a close

in darkness and desolation the honourable history of English farming?

More than thirty years ago, a reasonable Socialist would patiently explain if he were given the chance, one Henry George watched the development of California, where nearly all the wealth consisted of natural opportunities. They were land, rivers, harbour, mines, and timber. Man had not, as yet, contributed much of that stored-up fruit of exertion called capital. Henry George watched the ease with which the first-comers monopolised the best of these natural opportunities; and he saw how quickly the gulf widened between the rich and the poor, every new-comer having to pay tribute to those already in possession. He realised that when money was spent on constructing roads, railways, telegraphs, and docks, or when cities grew up and were paved and lighted and equipped with schools and parks and post-offices, values were being created all the time for those who owned the land. He also noticed that this tribute which had to be paid to those in possession of the soil, was an obstacle retarding, and sometimes preventing, the carrying out of schemes for the benefit of the whole community. Watching this

process, he formulated his theories on land values, and declared that those who monopolise the land or claim possession of any natural opportunities with which the world has been endowed, ought to return in tribute to the community a large part of the revenue they derive from such possession. But he held that no one should be taxed on improvements they effected, or on work they accomplished. Those who enriched the country should be rewarded for so enriching it; but those who merely owned rendered no service, and had no real claim on their fellows.

Like most men responsible for a wide and pregnant generalisation, Henry George overestimated the efficiency of his plan. It was to him almost a universal panacea. Living where and when he did, he assumed that the whole revenue required by the State could easily be obtained from land, as indeed in the California of his day it well might have been. He therefore advocated a single tax on the site value of the land, and no other taxes at all.

There is no question that his fundamental ideas apply to England to-day as truly as they did to California then. But with this important difference, that in England the value of the opportunities nature still affords

are proportionately much less, while the value of the stored up results of previous labour and enterprise are much greater. A single tax on the annual site value of English land should not, therefore, be expected to supply the amount now raised by rates and taxes. Moreover, in a country where land has long been held in private ownership, it would be harsh to the landowning classes suddenly to tax land-values up to the hilt, however great the resulting advantages might be to the nation as a whole.

The transition from the present system—which has unmistakably resulted in diminishing our agricultural population and in causing those who still labour on the land to be the most backward part of the community—to a condition of things in which it will be worth no man's while to own land unless he knows how to deal with it efficiently, must be difficult, and it must take time to accomplish; but that does not mean that nothing can or should be done.

Truth will prevail even when, as is the case with all human expression of it, it contains an admixture of error, and it is impressive to see how the ideas of a printer who knew nothing of agriculture have forced themselves

into the field of practical politics. But a certain danger does arise from the fact that these ideas not only originated with, but have been, up to now, chiefly advocated by men detached from the soil, and possessing small sympathy with or understanding of the existing land system or its representatives.

The case is surely remarkably like that which arose in America in the first half of the last century, when the legalised and constitutional system of slavery was attacked by such men as William Lloyd Garrison, who had never owned a slave and possessed none of the special knowledge of the slave-owning aristocracy of the South. Had the Southern States, in the 'forties or 'fifties of the last century, tried to understand the advantages of free labour, they might have shaped the course of abolition so as to have secured both compensation and ample time to adjust themselves to the new order of things. They preferred to suspect the motives of the emancipators rather than to understand the benefits of freedom; and the result was that Emancipation cost the United States four times the cash value of all the slaves, as well as the blood of half-a-million men, and the impoverishment of the South.

The difficulty of our present problem is increased by the fact that the Henry George men have no personal acquaintance with the land, and are often fanatics, inclined to over simplify a complex problem; so that they have succeeded in almost totally alienating the sympathy of many progressive people who should be their natural allies. For years after the publication of *Progress and Poverty*, it was difficult to hold a meeting in advocacy of anything, from cremation to the amendment of the Factory Act, without the business of the evening being hindered, and its time wasted by a single-taxer, anxious to air his panacea, and everybody knows what the state of the newspaper correspondence columns has been lately!

As a result, though this is not generally realised, it would be difficult to discover a group of prominent Fabians willing to work strenuously for the taxation of land-values! 'The ideal of the single tax and the ideal of complete land nationalisation,' said the report of the Fabian Society's Land and Rural Problems Committee (August 2), 'are both so far off as not to demand a searching examination. . . . In purely agricultural districts the site value is a negligible quantity.'

On the other hand, the disinclination of those who have the practical management of land, fairly to consider ideas which are certain largely to influence legislation in the future, is strikingly illustrated by a memorandum recently prepared by the Council of the Surveyors' Institution. That memorandum is based on a consideration of the applicability to England of the single tax—which is a scheme in which hardly anybody now believes, in its totality at any rate, not even the Secretary of the League for the Taxation of Land Values! The memorandum contrives to avoid dealing with those of Henry George's principles which are really valid and important, and mainly influence the minds of the men who are now conducting a taxation of land values campaign.

The memorandum says that 'private ownership of land is essential to the prosperity of the country, and it would be intolerably unjust to confiscate by special taxation the whole or part of the money invested in it.' But this is surely a statement which ignores the fact that land, besides being necessary to man's existence, is limited in amount, and that as the existing system fails to secure a decent livelihood for our agricultural

population, it may be necessary to try some other plan.

The kernel of the whole matter is that students of the rural problem of various shades of politics[1] are compelled to believe that the natural opportunities of our country are not now used in the manner best adapted to further the health and happiness of the people, and the welfare of the community as a whole; and that many persons are becoming convinced of the fundamental justice of Henry George's basic idea, and have made up their minds that the present conditions must not be allowed to continue unchallenged till the Day of Judgment.

Surely the wise policy, in their own interest, is for capable, well-meaning landowners to recognise that this tendency is likely to gain strength, and to endeavour to guide and regulate it. The flood which is gathering may irrigate the land with results by which they themselves may benefit, or it may become a deluge sweeping them utterly away, as in Ireland.

Report of Land and Rural Reforms Committee. Constable. 1913.

[1] *See* Lord Lansdowne's speeches, quoted on pp. 251-2.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

A STRENUOUS attempt has been made throughout this book to avoid party bias. What are wanted in discussions on the rural problem are facts not opinions. It will be a great pity if, after the prolonged discussion of the facts which we are having this year, there is not, between the best instructed minds on both sides in politics, a reasonable approximation to agreement on at least the following dozen points :—

1. That most of the talking and writing on the Land Problem is being done by politicians and journalists, rather than by the experts—farmers and labourers.

2. That, as Lord Lansdowne said (23rd June), 'the yield of the national estate is a great deal too small; it is patent and obvious that more ought to be got out of the land'—by, for example, increased production and better organisation of the sale of products.

3. That, as Lord Lansdowne's speech in advocacy of a large plan of land purchase

showed, the existing land system is susceptible of substantial improvement. 'It is common ground of both parties,' Lord Lansdowne went on to say on 4th July, 'that there is a Land Question, and that its problems have to be dealt with, and dealt with with a certain amount of courage.'[1]

4. That sincere students and well-wishers of the rural districts should increasingly endeavour to promote a non-party investigation and consideration of rural problems, and a recognition of the great differences between the conditions of agricultural life and industry in one part of rural Britain and another.

5. That an attempt should be made, by those who have been alarmed by some·

[1] It is so difficult to give within a strictly limited space an entirely fair summary of the various and varying views of different political schools on the Land Question that the Author contents himself with referring the reader to the publications of the following organisations: The English League for the Taxation of Land Values, 376-7 Strand, London, W.C. (which has absorbed the Land Nationalisation Society); the Scottish League with the same object, 67 West Nile Street, Glasgow; the Land Law Reform Association, 21 John Street, Adelphi, London, W.C. (with which are amalgamated the Free Land League and the Leaseholds Enfranchisement Association); the Land Union, St Stephen's House, Westminster, London, S.W. (which represents the opposition to Mr Lloyd George and Mr Joseph Fels); and the Fabian Society (which represents the views of studious Socialists).

ill-informed discussion of the land system, to understand and appreciate the case of those who contend that the present system of placing an undue burden on rural buildings and improvements is an obstacle to agricultural progress, and that, on the other hand, those who bring to the consideration of rural problems no personal experience of rural life and industry, should endeavour to realise that people who do not accept their views may still have a grip of some important factors in the situation in the country districts.

6. That to whatever extent the labourer may have benefited by the slight increase in wages which has taken place, and by old age pension, insurance, and compensation for accidents legislation, the price of necessaries has risen; and that, apart from this, the current rate of pay, not only in the black belt of low wage districts, but in other areas, is relatively lower than urban workers of comparable strength, skill, and experience are obtaining, and is unjust, in view of the monetary position of agriculturists who bring reasonable business aptitude to their farming.

7. That in view of the impoverishing emigration of the most promising young men

and women from the villages, this rise in wages should be brought about, in the shortest possible time, by the agency of a well-considered District Wages Board system, by well-led trade unionism, and by personal influence.

8. That though a rise in wages may be a sound way of attacking the housing problem, the scarcity of adequate cottages in many districts is such as to call for immediate action, preferably in the direction of (*a*) making State grants in aid, in respect of the annual loss on supervised District Council building schemes, and (*b*) stimulating the action of the local authorities.

9. That while there is room in England for an increase in the number of persons owning land, and the increase which is now proceeding is desirable, it does not appear, in view of the actual working of the landlord and tenant system in this country at present, and the possibilities of improving it still further, that the commercial advantage to small holders or large in owning land, or the advantage to the community by reason of their doing so, is such as to warrant the State giving exceptional financial encouragement to ownership as against tenancy,

particularly on a scale approaching that which has been given in Ireland, where the experiment, fully justified by special circumstances, has been enormously costly.

10. That something might be done to furnish tenants with whole or part loans at a reasonable rate of interest in cases in which the whole estate under which they hold their land is sold, always provided that, as Lord Haversham's Committee suggested, the purchase price in no case exceeds the market value of the land—in Ireland the effect of State credit has been to add several years' purchase to the value of the land—and the annual payments do not exceed the amount the tenant can afford to pay.

11. That legislation might be enacted simplifying the transfer and tenure of land, and enlarging the powers of the community to acquire land for the community at a valuation; while the results of the working of Land Courts in Scotland deserve careful study in the light of English requirements.[1]

12. That while better wages, improved housing, and right access to the land are

[1] The Scottish Land Courts deal only with holdings up to a rent of £50, or of an area up to 50 acres.

necessary, an improved system of general and technical education; higher ideals not only of the place of education in life, but of personal freedom; and a wider conception of the possibilities of Rural Civilisation are essential to the solution of that problem of Britain Outside the Towns which we call the LAND PROBLEM.

The English native—one of the most difficult studies of our time—is what lack of education, 'the laws of political economy,' emigration, and ill-usage generally have made him. His sickness is no more to be cured by this or the other piece of legislation alone than it is to be healed by morris-dancing, though those who make it possible for the labourer to dance have their finger on one secret, and there is no more convinced supporter of Mr Cecil Sharp's work than I am. It takes a soul to move a body even to a cleaner sty, and when rural reformers talk about Denmark I sometimes think that if I were asked to specify one good thing in that country for introduction here, and one thing only, I might be tempted to plump for the Danish Rural High School, which does not teach agriculture, which does not

teach anything out of which a living can be made, but sets before the countryside an Ideal of Life.

Agriculture in Denmark and Holland is what it is, agricultural education in those two countries is what it is, largely because education in general is what it is. One is conscious there of a respect for general education which is more common in Scotland and Wales than in England. The social position of the rural schoolmaster and schoolmistress in Denmark and Holland is strangely different from what most of their English colleagues are accustomed to. Until the head of the rural school in England gets something like the respect accorded to the parson, rural England will continue to fall short of what it might be.

It is impossible, with any marked degree of success, to impose a high agricultural education on an imperfectly educated people.

And agricultural education by itself is not going to keep farmers' sons and daughters in the country and make the life of the country satisfying. What these young men and young women lack is education in living. The Press and books are full of talk about the need for a better cultivation of the land.

But the minds of the people on the land need to be cultivated too. Their lives have to be enriched. Only as this is done can changes which are really worth while be wrought.

In Holland and Denmark, owing to the absence of coal and iron, some of the energy and intelligence devoted in this country to manufactures and commerce is set free for concentration on agriculture. Although in Great Britain, with coal and iron, plus land, we have more than one string to our national bow, agriculture cannot afford to be starved of brains and disciplined intelligence. We want more brains and go in our rural districts, and, as we get this, agriculture will obtain its right place in the nation's perspective. To be practical, we need, as one of the first instruments of rural progress, an Education Act on quite as root and branch lines as Mr Pease has outlined. But merely to Board-school the countryside will be vain. The problem of the half-educated young people from their late teens to their early twenties, will be untouched.

I have lived nearly twelve years in an English hamlet, and I have written several books, and some millions of words outside of them, about what Science can do for the

farmer—though he and his man Hodge know very much more than they are given credit for—and how Mr Giles ought to have deeper-milking cows, plough more and grass less, and be more of a social animal in his business transactions, and should do this, that, and the other thing; and it has all been true. But it has been borne in upon me now and then that I might perhaps have better justified my part in rural life, the dull, sad texture of which is shot through so inspiringly by threads of courage, kindness, and beauty, had I started a Höjskole and worked in it! It is enlightenment: a fuller development of the powers of mind and soul, that the countryside is starving for, and while we forget this we have no grasp of our problem.

But little can be done with people who are ill-fed, badly housed, and dispirited about their future. The character and the outlook of Rural Britain will improve as progress is made with the Wages, the Cottage, and the LAND PROBLEM.

It is to be hoped, however, that our politicians do not overestimate the extent of their knowledge of the rural situation. Let them remember how much they have had to learn about South Africa and Ireland!

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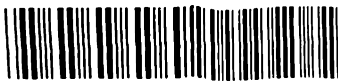
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