

THE STORY  
OF THE  
AGRICULTURAL  
CULTURE

BY HENRY DUNN



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**THE STORY OF THE  
AGRICULTURAL CLUB  
1918-1921**

*By the same Author.*

**AN AGRICULTURAL FAGGOT.**

**FOOD SUPPLIES IN PEACE AND WAR.**

# THE STORY OF THE AGRICULTURAL CLUB

1918 - 1921

BY  
R. HENRY REW,  
President of the Club

With a Foreword by the  
LORD BLEDISLOE, K.B.E.

---

“The clash of arguments and jar of words”

*Cowper*

“‘A babbled of green fields’”

*Shakespeare*

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1922





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“Piper, sit thee down and write  
In a book that all may read”—  
So he vanished from my sight :  
And I plucked a hollow reed,  
And I made a rural pen.

BLAKE.

## PREFATORY NOTE

IT is with some hesitation that I have compiled this chronicle. When circumstances brought the career of the Agricultural Club to a close, a desire was expressed by some of its members that the papers and addresses submitted to the Club should be put on permanent record. A few of them have been published in different quarters—mainly in the *Journal* of the Ministry of Agriculture—but the majority were circulated only to members of the Club and were not accessible to the public. One or two indeed never attained even this degree of permanence, but were condensed into a typewritten summary. A complete collection was therefore impossible. Even had it been possible there would still have been difficulty. Some of the addresses were prepared mainly to stimulate discussion, and their authors would not wish them to be regarded as embodying their considered opinions, while others were of passing interest which was not likely to be re-awakened at this time.

Being in doubt I consulted the members of the Club—with the usual result. To compare small things with great, I was in like case with John Bunyan—

“Some said let them live: some let them die.”

The former were in a large majority, but minorities, even if they “must suffer,” have nevertheless some claim to consideration. Eventually, of course, I compromised. I decided to select from the *dissecta membra* a sufficient number of fragments

to make a more or less coherent story which should give a fair representation of the general spirit of the discussions and convey, so far as might be done in cold print, a sense of the atmosphere of the Club. Now that I read the story I find that it has not developed exactly as I intended when I began it—

“When at the first I took my pen in hand  
Thus for to write I did not understand  
That I at all should make a little book  
In such a mode.”

One obvious and unintended defect is that the opinions of the story-teller have intruded unduly into the Story. This is inexcusable, but it can now only be brazened out. It may testify to the stimulating effect of the discussions.

An apology is due, in advance, to those whose utterances have been quoted. I am conscious that in many cases the extracts given from papers read give an inadequate idea of their merits, while the brief notes of discussions—which in the absence of a shorthand writer were all that were available—do much less than justice to the speeches, which in many cases were reasoned and balanced arguments, frequently reaching a high dialectical level. It is but fair to add that the existence of any record of the discussions is due to the assiduity of the Honorary Secretaries of the Club—Captain Page Roberts and Mr. S. A. Smith—both of whom were very successful in making summaries of the proceedings.

But whatever may be its deficiencies, I make no apology for giving the Story to the world. Lord Bledisloe in his sympathetic “Foreword” speaks of it as an “inspiring record,” and I venture to think that this is a true description. No one is better qualified than he to speak of the proceedings at the Club, for very few, if any, of the members were more regular in their attendance at the meetings. The record

is an inspiration because within its limits it proves that all concerned in the welfare of Agriculture may not only meet in the spirit of comradeship but may unite in the furtherance of the objects which are so largely common to all.

For me the Club was a liberal education. My most indelible memory of it is the unfailing kindness and consideration which all the members at all times displayed towards their fortunate President.

R. H. R.

*February, 1922.*

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R. H. R.

*February, 1922.*



# FOREWORD

RIGHT gladly do I comply with the request of the author that I contribute a Foreword to this inspiring record of an epoch-making and surprisingly successful social experiment.

Initiated by the author's own fertile brain, and guided by his tactful and sympathetic pilotage, the Agricultural Club during the four years of its all-too-short existence rendered a signal service, not merely to those who enjoyed the privilege of its membership, but indirectly to the whole rural community, which it would be difficult to over-estimate.

Arising out of the existence of the Agricultural Wages Board and the necessity for its members to assemble in London the night before its deliberations, it resulted in a frank interchange of opinion—often bluntly, but always kindly expressed—and a mutual respect and intimate friendliness between leading representatives of the three classes generally believed to be irreconcilably hostile in outlook and purpose, which would have surprised most armchair politicians who know little of the mentality of the true countryman, had they looked in upon our pleasant gatherings in the erstwhile studio of the great British artist Gainsborough—possibly the greatest, and certainly the most truthful of England's eminent portrait painters. On many a chilly winter's evening, illuminated and warmed by two great fire-places and the often unvarnished rhetoric and scathing sallies of bucolic orators of very varying political views and social experience, the owner of many broad acres, the tenant farmer of wide agricultural experience and renown, and the industrious and independent farm worker, living in and loving (as only an English agricultural worker can) his humble, creeper-clad cottage home, could have been seen filling their pipes from the same tobacco-pouch and enjoying each other's company in an unaffectedly congenial atmosphere. To me, as to many others, these gatherings were a monthly tonic and a

valuable education. All alike were *ascripti glebæ* and felt that inspiration which present or past contact with our common *alma mater*, the English country-side, so potently evokes in the breasts of her own children. If the great defects of modern rural England are (as indeed they are) the prevalence of suspicion between classes and creeds, and a general lack of vocal expression of thought and aspiration, no one could suggest that such defects vitiated the atmosphere of the Agricultural Club. All listened with respect and generally with sympathy, if not with agreement, to conversational speeches, free from all conventional veneer and artificiality, which they felt to be candid and sincere, and prompted by the conviction that their translation into everyday experience would redound to the happiness, contentment and prosperity of the whole village community. Never have I heard the voice of the son of the soil ring truer than at these historic gatherings. The Press was unrepresented. The farmer, the land-owner and the worker alike spoke their true minds to one another fearlessly and honestly. Notably so the worker. What we always listened to was the authentic voice of rural labour, tinged oftentimes with a touch of true poetic sentiment which carried its earnest appeals straight to the heart of its audience.

The fact that this section (and may I without offence add, the most interesting, informing and attractive section of our Club) appeared to desire and unhesitatingly advocated the entire elimination, by the process of Nationalisation, of that branch of the agricultural Trinity to which I and several others belonged, in no degree affected our profound admiration of many of its representatives and of the talented genius which inspired the able and clear presentment of their case.

Many of those whose social environment differs profoundly from theirs, but who, as the outcome of these happy evenings, can now claim—and be proud to claim—comradeship with these men, must surely realise in face of the many and grave economic difficulties which menace (and threaten sometimes to overwhelm) our oldest and most essential industry, that greater mutual knowledge and the sympathy and confidence which flow from it will prove more effective in solving the pressing and vital problems of our country-side than the well-meant but often harmful activities of political enthusiasts. If there is bondage in the country-side, it is

(or arises out of) the bondage of ignorance—ignorance of the economic position, the ideals, the true wants, and the sentiments of those among whom we live and move and have our being. In this sense not merely the agricultural worker, but also the squire and the farmer have some need of emancipation. As Cowper says :—

“ He is the free man whom the Truth makes free,  
And all are slaves besides.”

As in the days of Gainsborough, 140 years ago, so in these latter days, the room in which the Club met was indeed a “ Palace of Truth.” The discussions pointed the way to a condition of greater freedom in which all alike could participate.

The good seed which was sown by the far-sighted and statesman-like hand of the much-respected author of this memoir in establishing the Agricultural Club has taken root to the permanent advantage of rural England. The young plant must assuredly not now be allowed to wither by reason of the fact that the Club, like its somewhat unpopular parent, has been consigned to the limbo of post-war memories. In some other and more permanent form it should be, and indeed it *must* be, revived and fertilised by the sympathetic efforts of those who enjoyed its membership and who realise its far-reaching and healthful potentialities. In this event, if there be no other fruitful aftermath of the Great War, there may yet be a Renaissance of Rural England, and thereby the establishment on a more stable basis than ever before, of the great nation to which we are all proud to belong.

BLEDISLOE.

LYDNEY PARK,  
*February, 1922.*







*Elliott & Fry.*

SIR HENRY REW, K.C.B.;  
PRESIDENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL CLUB.



# THE STORY OF THE AGRICULTURAL CLUB.

## CHAPTER I.

### HISTORICAL.

MAN has been described as a "clubbable" animal, though it is not certain that he has an exclusive right to the adjective. It would be easy to contend that rooks, at any rate, are clubbable and that the kind of institution most in vogue with them is a discussion club. Bees also, though they are mostly regarded as factory-workers—

"Creatures that by a rule in nature teach  
The act of order to a peopled kingdom"—

might also claim to be clubbable, while, if the *Jungle Book* may be taken as an authority, it would be difficult to deny the clubbable instinct in monkeys and wolves.

Whether it was in response to the sub-conscious prompting of inherited instinct, or no, the fact to be recorded here is that no sooner had a body of men and women been officially brought together to form the Agricultural Wages Board than they immediately proceeded to form an unofficial Club. It is safe to add that all of them obtained more personal satisfaction from the unofficial body than from the official one, which is perhaps another way of saying that occupations which are optional are more attractive than those which are obligatory.

The Agricultural Wages Board set up under the Corn Production Act consisted of thirty-nine persons, of whom sixteen were representatives of farmers, sixteen representa-

tives of farm-workers, and the remainder appointed by the Minister of Agriculture as independent and impartial persons.

The first meeting of the Wages Board was held on December 6, 1917, and Mr. R. E. Prothero (afterwards Lord Ernle), who was then Minister of Agriculture, attended to give it his official blessing. In the course of his address he remarked that the members collectively possessed "a very varied and a very intimate knowledge of agricultural conditions throughout the whole country," and added that never before had a body assembled which represented the agricultural industry so fully and fairly as the Agricultural Wages Board. It was an inspiring address, and the following passage expressed an idea which pervaded the future deliberations of the Board and the proceedings of the Agricultural Club:—

"The farmer and the worker are both of them capitalists; the farmer has money—not so much as he wants very often—and the worker has labour. If a remunerative return is denied to either of these classes—is denied, that is, either to the farmer or to the labourer—the result is practically the same. The farmer or the labourer leaves the land. Thus no doubt there may at first sight seem to be a direct conflict between the interests of those who pay wages and the interests of those who receive wages. But my own view is, that the differences are comparatively superficial, and for this reason: Neither the farmer nor the labourer can get on without the assistance of the other; and that fact means this—that behind and above the personal superficial differences which may arise, there are common interests which are really deep and permanent."

The Agricultural Wages Board was in its time subjected to much criticism and accused of many faults, but from one charge at least it escaped—that of idleness. Seldom, if ever, has a public body devoted itself more assiduously to the duties entrusted to it. It met early and rose late (on one occasion the day's meeting ended about 11 p.m.) and frequently, in the earlier stages, the meetings lasted over two days and on at least one occasion over three. As

members of the Board came from all parts of the country—as distant as Northumberland and Cornwall—they necessarily reached London on the day preceding the meeting. Thus the suggestion arose that the Board rooms should be open on the evening previous, so that members could, if they wished, foregather there. This suggestion developed into a proposal that they should discuss subjects of common interest, and thus the idea of a Club fructified.

A meeting of the members of the Wages Board was held on March 13, 1918, when it was decided to form a club for the discussion of agricultural subjects, every member of the Board and its staff to have the right of membership and power being taken to elect by ballot a limited number of outsiders. A little later it was decided to extend the right of membership to members of District Wages Committees, but this right was not in fact largely exercised.

The following were the rules of the Club :—

1. The object of the Club is the discussion of subjects relating to agricultural and rural development.

2. Members of the Agricultural Wages Board, District Wages Committees, and officers on the Board's staff, are eligible for membership of the Club without election.

3. Persons, other than members of the Agricultural Wages Board, District Wages Committees, or officers on the Board's staff, may be elected as members of the Club, but the total number of such persons shall not at any time exceed 20. Any such persons must be proposed by the Committee at a meeting of the Club, and the name, address and qualifications of candidates must be stated in the notice of the meeting at which they are proposed to be elected. The election shall be by ballot.

4. The annual subscription shall be 5s.

5. Any member ceasing to be a member of the Agricultural Wages Board, District Wages Committee, or officer on the Board's staff, shall also cease to be a member of the Club, but shall be eligible for election under Rule 3.

6. The Officers of the Club shall be a President, three Vice-Presidents, and an Honorary Secretary. Of the Vice-Presidents, one shall be an appointed member, one a representative of employers, and one a representative of workers, on the Agricultural Wages Board.

7. The Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, Honorary Secretary, one appointed member, three repre-

sentatives of employers and three representatives of workers on the Agricultural Wages Board. The Officers and Committee shall be elected annually, in January.

8. The Committee shall arrange the subjects for discussion at meetings of the Club, and for the persons to introduce them. Non-members of the Club may be invited by the Committee to open discussion. Speakers introducing a subject shall be limited to half an hour, and subsequent speakers to ten minutes.

9. Any member of the Club may introduce one visitor at any meeting. Visitors may only take part in discussions by consent of the meeting. No person may be introduced as a visitor at more than six meetings in the course of a year.

10. Any alterations of these rules must be proposed by at least three members (being members of the Wages Board) and no alteration shall be made unless due notice of the proposed alteration has been given to every member of the Club, and the alteration is carried by a majority of two-thirds of the members present at a meeting of the Club.

The distinctive character of the Club was that farmers and agricultural labourers were placed on an absolute equality, and that the maintenance of this equality was the basis of the constitution. This was in effect embodying in the rules of the Club the fundamental principle of the Agricultural Wages Board.

It is curious that the historical significance of the composition of the Wages Board has been so little regarded. The relationship of man and master in Agriculture evolved out of the manorial system, under which the hired labourer was a serf, and developed through a long period in which the farmer's status and power, political and economic, steadily increased, while the agricultural wage-earner (largely owing to the superfluity and immobility of labour in the rural districts) sank lower and lower into a position of dependence and subservience. The gulf widened between employer and employed, and although it was undoubtedly often bridged by personal relations of mutual respect and regard, it yawned inexorably in public affairs. When the labourer won his way to the polling booth, political equality was established, but this had little or no effect on the social or economic relations of the two classes. If labourers were invited to join an Agricultural

Committee, or other body, it was regarded as a liberal recognition of democratic theories, but it occurred to no one that they should be represented on equal terms.

A year or two ago I had occasion to attend a meeting in the market town of a typical agricultural district. It purported to be a conference between the representatives of farmers and of farm-workers with regard to a dispute then in progress. I was shown into the conference room, where I found the farmers assembled in force round a large table, and I was honoured with a seat at the head of the table by the side of the Chairman. After some discussion among themselves the Chairman announced that they were ready to receive the representatives of the workers. About half a dozen of them entered, and were ranged on a form against the wall at the lower end of the room. The Chairman addressed them civilly enough, but with much the same air of condescension as a magistrate assumes in speaking from the Bench. I am sure that no offence was intended or taken. The position seemed perfectly natural to both parties. It was the normal and habitual relation of master and man in discussion.

The Agricultural Wages Board was the expression of a new relationship. It was a body formed to discuss and decide certain vital economic questions affecting Agriculture, and its members met not as "master and man" but as "man and man." It was an agricultural body really and fully representing the interests of working Agriculturists, and recognising the equality of capital and labour, to which Lord Ernle referred in his address.

The title of the Agricultural Club was deliberately chosen to embody the idea that the familiar term "agriculturist" is not synonymous, as is frequently assumed, with "farmer." The largest number of agriculturists are those who actually till the soil, and they are strictly entitled to be so described. It is in fact a stretch of language, etymologically at any rate, to describe as an agriculturist one who employs others to cultivate the land for him.

The location of the Club—and of the Wages Board—was interesting, architecturally and historically. The meeting-

place was a spacious room built over the back yard or garden of 80 Pall Mall, lighted mainly from the top, and, in spite of two capacious fireplaces and a supplementary gas stove, apt to be chilly and draughty on a winter's night. The atmosphere, owing to the pervading influence of My Lady Nicotine, tended to be smoky, but it was never heated, and always genial even when the thermometer was unusually depressed. The heat of argument sometimes engendered sparks, but they lost all fire at once in the cooling air of good-humour and good-fellowship.

Pall Mall is one of the many distinctive street names of London. Its origin is said to be in the game of "paille maille," described as "something between golf and croquet," which became fashionable early in the seventeenth century. There was plenty of room then to play games, for in 1656 only eight householders were recorded as living in the Pall Mall. I take the following from *An Historical Guide to London*, by G. R. Stirling Taylor :—

"Nos. 80-83, on the south side, are the centre and west wing of all that remains of the beautiful Schomberg House, which was built during the reign of William III, and takes its name from the Duke of Schomberg, William III's famous general, who was killed at the battle of the Boyne; the house was built by his son. Afterwards it was tenanted by the Duke of Cumberland, who fought at Culloden. But perhaps its greatest tenant was Gainsborough, the painter, who lived in the west wing (after the house was divided up into tenements) from 1777-1783, where the beauty and fashion of London flocked to sit for their portraits; Cosway, the miniature painter, occupied the centre in 1787-99. Near Schomberg House once stood the house where Nell Gwynne lived from 1671-1687, when she died there: she talked to Charles over the garden wall at the Mall side, which Charles frequented. Two doors eastward of this house lived Sir William Temple, 1681. Behind the west end of Pall Mall lies Marlborough House, overlooking St. James's Park. In the earlier next house to Schomberg House, on its west side, lived Mrs. Fitzherbert, the morganatic wife of George IV."

The studio in which Gainsborough immortalised on canvas the fashionable folk of his day was the meeting-place of the Agricultural Club. The walls which had echoed to the flippant scandal and gay gossip of the town a century and a half ago were equally responsive to the country-side conversation and agricultural arguments of the present day. And in another hundred and fifty years——. In that spot—

“Where I made one—turn down an empty glass.”

The Club held thirty-seven meetings for discussion. On two occasions the proceedings did not begin with a prepared address on paper; in one case the gentleman who was to introduce the subject failed to attend owing to unexpected detention at the House of Commons, and in the other case the subject was, so to speak, thrown down from the Chair to be scrambled for without formal introduction.

The subjects discussed took a wide range and were as follows :—

- “The Training of the Rural Worker in the operations of the Farm,” Sir A. D. Hall, K.C.B.
- “Pig Keeping in War Time,” Lord Bledisloe, K.B.E.
- “Village Life After the War,” Sir Henry Rew, K.C.B.
- “Industrial Farming,” Mr. C. S. Orwin, M.A.
- “The Place of the Small Holder in the Problem of Rural Reconstruction,” Mr. George Nicholls, O.B.E.
- “The Place of Women in Agricultural Development,” Mrs. R. Wilkins, O.B.E.
- “British Agriculture as a Business Proposition,” Mr. J. H. Guy.
- “The Decline of Village Life : Cause and Remedy,” Mr. Haman Porter.
- “Village Reconstruction,” Sir H. T. Eve, K.B.E.
- “Rural Housing : Policy and Administration,” Sir Lawrence Weaver, K.B.E.
- “Agricultural Development and National Welfare,” Mr. R. V. Lennard.
- “Agricultural Organisation with particular reference to guaranteed prices,” The Rt. Hon. F. D. Acland, M.P.
- “Food Production in War and Peace,” Sir T. H. Middleton, K.B.E.
- “Intensive Culture : Is there Scope for Further Development ? ” Mr. R. R. Robbins, C.B.E.

- "A Few Thoughts on Agricultural Reconstruction and Free Trade," Mr. W. S. Miller.  
 "Land Nationalisation," Mr. Christopher Turnor.  
 "Apprenticeship in Agriculture," Sir A. Hazlerigg, Bart.  
 "Organisation of the Village," Sir D. Newton, K.B.E.  
 "The Origin of Land Tenure," Mr. A. G. L. Rogers, M.A.  
 "Land Settlement," Sir F. L. C. Floud, K.C.B.  
 "The Worker's Share in Agriculture," Sir Henry Rew, K.C.B.  
 "Suspicion," Mr. Castell Wrey.  
 "Rural Housing and Cottage Rents." No formal introduction.  
 "A Brief Résumé of the Condition of Agriculture," Mr. A. Wadman.  
 "Agricultural Housing and Rents," Lord Astor.  
 "Farming Accounts and Costings," Mr. H. G. Howell.  
 "Milk Production," Colonel Sir Archibald Weigall, K.C.M.G.  
 "Land Tenure," Mr. E. W. Langford.  
 "How the State can Best Help Agriculture." No formal introduction.  
 "Realities of the Wheat Position at Home and Abroad," Capt. R. T. Hinckes.  
 "The Farm Worker as Manager," Mr. F. E. Green.  
 "Unemployment in Agriculture and its Causes," Mr. Haman Porter.  
 "Unemployment in Agriculture," Mr. George Dallas.  
 "The Agricultural Labourer at Home and Abroad," Mr. A. G. L. Rogers.  
 "Village Clubs," Mr. H. Lacey.  
 "Land and Labour," Mr. W. R. Smith, M.P.  
 "Rural Life in Denmark," Mr. J. Nugent Harris.



## CHAPTER II.

### PERSONAL.

At the end of 1918 the Committee reported that the membership of the Club was—

Members of the Agricultural Wages Board	. 38
Members of District Wages Committees	. . 47
Members of staff	. . . . . 31
Members elected under Rule 3	. . . . . 14
	—
Total	. . . . . 130

From that time the number of members altered but slightly.

The Original Officers and Committee were—

*President*—Sir Henry Rew, K.C.B.

*Vice-Presidents*—The Right Honble. Sir Ailwyn Fellowes, K.C.V.O., K.B.E., Messrs. George Dallas, H. Padwick, C.B.E.

*Committee*—The Right Hon. F. D. Acland, M.P., Messrs. Colin Campbell, George Edwards, H. Overman, C.B.E., R. Richards, R. R. Robbins, Denton Woodhead.

*Hon. Secretary*—Captain F. W. Page Roberts.

The only changes subsequently made were caused by the resignation of Sir Ailwyn Fellowes (now Lord Ailwyn), who on his retirement from the Chairmanship of the Agricultural Wages Board became ineligible under the rules as an ordinary member of the Club, but was at once elected as a member under Rule 3. Mr. Collingwood Hope, who had succeeded him as Chairman of the Wages Board, was elected as a Vice-President of the Club in his place. Captain Page Roberts, on leaving the staff of the Wages Board, resigned the honorary secretaryship in July, 1919. He was also

elected a member under Rule 3. He was succeeded as honorary secretary by Mr. S. A. Smith.

The Agricultural Club was an exclusive body. The right to membership was acquired only by service and could not be denied or alienated. Any person ceasing to serve the Agricultural Wages Board on a District Wages Committee forfeited at once his or her right of membership and was *ipso facto* removed from the roll of members. As Lord Melbourne said of the Garter, membership was esteemed because there was "no damned nonsense about merit" attaching to it, though in this case the qualification was one which denoted the possession of courage and public spirit. As a concession to human weakness the pure doctrine was adulterated by a rule permitting the election of a strictly limited number of members who were frankly chosen for special agricultural merit. This distinction was somewhat grudgingly accorded and for a long time the number was not made up to the maximum of twenty permitted by the rules.

The names of all those elected by the Club *honoris causa* are given below, but in several cases after election they acquired the right of membership by becoming members of District Wages Committees and were consequently transferred to the ordinary list.

A complete list of all who were at any time members of the Club appears in the Appendix.

Lord Ailwyn of Honingham, K.C.V.O., K.B.E.

A. W. Ashby.

Lord Justice Banks.

Sir Charles Bathurst, K.B.E. (afterwards Lord Bledisloe).

Lt.-General Sir E. Bethune, K.C.B.

Lady Margaret Boscawen.

Prof. J. B. Farmer, F.R.S., D.Sc.

A. Goddard, C.B.E.

F. E. Green.

Sir A. D. Hall, K.C.B.

Right Hon. Henry Hobhouse.

Prof. Brynor Jones.

R. V. Lennard, M.A.

J. M. Mackintosh.

J. J. Mallon.

W. A. May.

Sir T. H. Middleton, K.B.E.

Captain F. W. Page Roberts.

Miss Gladys Pott.

Right Hon. R. E. Prothero, M.P. (afterwards Lord Ernle).

Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P.

A. G. L. Rogers, M.A.

E. J. Russell, D.Sc., F.R.S.

Miss F. Saward.

The Earl of Selborne, K.G.

Miss M. Talbot, C.B.E. (afterwards Dame Meriel Talbot).

Christopher Turnor.

Lawrence Weaver, C.B.E. (afterwards Sir L. Weaver, K.B.E.)

It will be admitted that this array of names represents a wide range of agricultural interest and comprises many of those (not being members of the Club by right) who would be inscribed on an agricultural roll of honour.

The Club, however, though exclusive, was hospitable. It welcomed visitors—in limited numbers—at its meetings, and its discussions were frequently enlivened and enriched by contributions from representative people who attended as “outsiders.”

Several of those whose names are included among the readers of papers were present as visitors on other occasions, but in addition the following may be mentioned as having attended meetings as visitors and taken part in the discussions :—

H. R. Aldridge.

J. F. Blackshaw.

Right Hon. Sir A. Griffith Boscawen, M.P.

Mrs. Bradbury (Oxon).

Cloudesley Brereton.

Wilfrid Buckley.

Harold Cox.

The Marquess of Crewe, K.G.

Warwick Draper.

J. F. Duncan (Scotland).  
 C. B. Fisher.  
 G. R. Lane Fox, M.P.  
 T. Henderson (Scotland).  
 Mrs. Hobbs (Oxon).  
 Dr. McFadden.  
 W. A. Mount, M.P.  
 Mrs. Prothero (afterwards Lady Ernle).  
 Leslie Scott, M.P.  
 F. Selley.  
 R. Small.  
 R. J. Thompson.  
 Mrs. Watt (Canada).

There were, of course, many other visitors from time to time whom the spirit did not move to take part in the discussions.

The meetings varied in interest as well as magnitude. It was not easy to secure a steady succession of subjects and to persuade suitable people to introduce them. As the obligation to maintain the continuity, though properly the duty of the Committee, became mainly one of the perquisites of the President, I am free to confess that the level both of the papers and of the discussions was unequal. The range was wide. "Subjects relating to agricultural and rural development" comprehend plenty of pabulum. There was no deliberate exclusion of farm wages and conditions of labour, but there was a tacit understanding that the subjects lying directly within the province of the Agricultural Wages Board should not be prominent in the Club debates. So far as members of the Board were concerned the feeling was that they had more than enough of them at the Board Meetings. Obviously for a discussion Club it is desirable that the subjects introduced should be debatable, and the more controversial the better. The practical exclusion of wages questions therefore narrowed the field to some extent.

The attendance was never very large, but there was a group of faithful habitués who seldom missed a meeting. At the foundation of the Club it was contemplated that the

President should be changed annually, but the members insisted on repeatedly re-electing the individual who had undertaken the office in the first instance. My qualifications for the position were a habit of regular attendance and an unlimited capacity for listening. As a matter of fact, I missed only one meeting, my absence then being due to my dispatch on official business to Paris soon after the Armistice. On every other occasion I was in the Chair from the beginning to the end of the meeting. Except that I once or twice started the discussion my position was that of a keenly interested observer, as the active duties of the Chairmanship were negligible, and the task of keeping order was a sinecure.

There are many who will recall those meetings in Gainsborough's old studio with feelings of almost affectionate regret. It was a pleasant party which gathered on either side of the big Georgian fireplace on a winter's night. The murk and glamour of London were only a few yards distant, the motors and taxis passed in ceaseless procession outside the doors, the Automobile Club, with its cosmopolitan crowd, was next door, and near neighbours included the grave and reverend Athenæum, the serious Carlton, and the still more serious Reform, while across the way the select Marlborough Club, like the adjacent Marlborough House, reminded us of proximity to Royalty. In the core of the Metropolis, where historically and actually all that is eminent whether by rank or birth, by learning or influence, in the nation's life, was concentrated, a group of country folk foregathered to talk about their mutual concerns. Mr. George Edwards would tell the story—relevant to many discussions—of his early introduction to agricultural affairs as a boy of six scaring birds; Lord Selborne would recount his experience as the Chairman of a Parish Council consisting of seven labourers, one tradesman and one landowner, and their unanimous hostility to improvements in the village which would increase the rates; Mr. George Nicholls, from his own biography, would describe how a horseman on a farm, keen at his work and determined to "make good," could establish a position for himself and become Mayor of an important borough and

a Member of Parliament ; Mr. Acland would preach the gospel of co-operation, or introduce felicitous " chaff " into the solid grain of discussion ; Lord Bledisloe would advocate pigs and potatoes and insist on a settled agricultural policy ; Mr. Higdon would expatiate with halting eloquence on the blessings of Land Nationalisation and the right of the people to access to the land, while Mr. Hewitt would stipulate that the public right of access should not extend to his small holding ; Mr. Rea would contribute wise and sympathetic counsel ; Mr. Dallas would enunciate revolutionary principles in terms of sweet reasonableness ; Mr. Padwick would interpolate brief and pointed observations ; Mr. Wadman would anathematise the Wages Board and all its works amid the callous applause of its members ; Mr. Lovell, " oop from Zummerzset," would tell a plain unvarnished tale in the soft West country speech ; Mr. Colin Campbell, seldom interposing in discussion, would good-humouredly encourage the expression of views which he regarded as pernicious ; Mr. Denton Woodhead would demolish an argument with neatness and dispatch ; Mr. Orwin would illuminate the debates with the dry light of economics ; Mr. Haman Porter would insist on the love of the labourer for the land and the iniquity of the tied cottage ; and Mr. Walter Smith would state the Labour policy so persuasively that

" Even the ranks of Tuscany  
Could scarce forbear to cheer."

All these, and many more, memory recalls, and above all, and pervading all, is the atmosphere of comradeship, of common interest, and of mutual esteem and consideration. The unwritten watchword of the discussion, was frankness, the guiding impulse was to face the facts of any question open-eyed and fearlessly. It would be too much to claim that the Club always lived up to its ideals. In all discussions of questions on which men profoundly differ there is a tendency either to exaggeration or reservation. The partisans of a particular opinion are prone to overstate their case to a friendly audience and to understate it to a hostile one. In the discussions at the Agricultural Club, however,

frankness was the key-note and it was of course encouraged by the fact that the speeches were not reported. A summary of the discussions was prepared and issued for the information of absent members, and brief paragraphs appeared in the Wages Board Gazette and elsewhere. But no one "spoke for publication," which is so commonly fatal to sincerity. Had a verbatim report of the proceedings been taken, it would be found to include many statements and opinions which those who uttered them would have expressed differently and more guardedly had they been subject to the misunderstanding and distortion which is unhappily inseparable from public controversy.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE PURSUIT OF IDEALS.

THE saying is attributed to Napoleon—and is commonly quoted in a mutilated form—that “the British are a nation of shopkeepers, and the strange thing is that they are ashamed of it.” This may have been more or less true a century ago, but the time is long past since the British recognised that they are a commercial nation. Indeed the average Britisher, whatever his occupation or even if he has none, prides himself on being a man of business. We regard ourselves as pre-eminently a practical hard-headed people, with no nonsense about us, whereas in fact we are, in a marked degree, inveterate idealists.

The discussions at the Agricultural Club were mostly on practical topics, but however closely they kept to mother Earth, a vein of idealism ran through many of them. On some occasions a speaker would openly and avowedly “hitch his wagon to a star.”

Here is a passage from an address on “Village Reconstruction” :—

Village Reconstruction and rearrangement of the adjacent land needs great unselfishness on the part of all concerned. It will be a great test of character. It requires discipline and industry—an intense desire on the part of the inhabitant to make his neighbour as happy in his surroundings as he is himself, or happier.

It seems to me as a mere looker-on that to learn unselfishness, discipline and industry, we must turn to Nature—Nature that we all look at but seldom see.

Man has been given complete freedom of will and we can all do exactly what we like, restrained only by man-made laws which are intended to express the law of liberty. But man has no effective control over Nature—no control over life, and



it is a standing object lesson as to how we should use this freedom of will.

For the past few months I have been studying the works of Ruskin, and what that great man wrote from fifty to sixty years ago is so startlingly true in these times as it was then, that I beg all of you to take up your Ruskin once again.

For unselfishness and as a true model for Village Reconstruction, let us follow Ruskin on Trees, in *Modern Painters*, Vol. 5, p. 35. Many of you may have read it. The desire of each leaf is to do no harm to his neighbour, and yet attain its object in seeking light and air. So it should be where human beings are congregated, as in a village. Why are branches not straight in form? Simply because of their efforts in bending this way and that so as not to interfere with their neighbour. The tree is so unselfish that when collision with a neighbour is inevitable, the branch and leaves die—die—sooner than be selfish.

Ten minutes in a hammock chair under a tree will teach a man the rule of life. When man plants two trees too close to each other they do not quarrel, but develop on their outer sides and die off on the inner sides rather than interfere with each other.

Each leaf drinking in from the air is in close co-operation with the root by separate "silver cords," and while the leaf feeds the root, the root feeds the leaf. Man cuts the tree down and makes a pigstye out of the resulting boards, without a single thought as to the tree and as to how it grew and who made it grow.

Then as to Discipline.—Our boys who are serving have discipline, but we have next to none. No amelioration of social conditions can be made without discipline from top to bottom. The discipline of the "have-nots" or the "getters" needs to be of a higher order than that required by the "haves" or the "givers." The wish to "get" is not discipline, nor is vindictiveness. The ideal is based on Justice.—Is it fair? Is it just? is surely the sole test. That test rests on unselfishness and discipline.

The finest example of discipline is to be found in rooks. Rooks were on the earth long before man. If there were no birds on the earth, in three years there would be no human beings. The insects would have taken command and consumed everything green, and man would die of starvation after he had tried to exist on fish. Man thinks he can control rooks by organised shoots—the rook laughs, for he has always regulated his numbers according to available food, for centuries before guns were invented. Over a series of years the numbers of rooks are no more and no less whether man shoots them or not.

Rooks will arrange for a steady increase now that man has ploughed up grass. The food area for the rook has increased, and nature tells him that there are more bugs to kill—bugs which, if not eaten by birds, will prevent man from getting food.

This is an instance of idealism exhibiting itself in one whose main business in life—as a valuer—is severely practical. The scheme of Village Reconstruction to which Sir Trustram Eve referred is outlined in a memorandum, of which he was joint author with Lord Ernle and Lord Milner, published as an Appendix to the Report of the Selborne Agricultural Policy Committee. The scheme is one which goes to the root of things and proposes to readjust the physical structure of the villages so as to meet modern needs and, above all, to make land accessible to a larger number of those who desire to own or occupy it.

In another passage of his address to the Club, Sir Trustram Eve said:—

It is a settled principle that private interests must give way to public good, provided proper compensation is paid. The Lands Clauses Acts, Public Health Acts, Small Holdings Acts, and the like contain this principle.

Is it a question of public good that the villagers should be made happier? and incidentally given an incentive to stay in the village and not migrate to the towns, which is what is happening in every country in the world.

How can villagers be made happier? The answer is land—good land, in the right place, and on reasonable terms—rented land, and owned land, but land on some terms.

Land to a villager is his natural ladder—a ladder from a position of serfdom to that of a free man.

Before land is rearranged in or about villages the State must make up its mind whether receipts of farmers are to be artificially bolstered up for all time, and whether wages are to be dictated for ever, or whether free play for the individual is to be allowed to rule our lives at some future date.

In the *first* case you must make village surroundings and amenities suitable for wage earners, and in the other case, for free men who will work part time as wage earners and part time for themselves.

In another paper, entitled “A Few Thoughts on Agricultural Reconstruction and Free Trade,” Mr. W. S. Miller propounded his suggestions for the attainment of the

highest ideal of world prosperity and universal peace. Coming from Wales, idealism was perhaps expected from him. He set out two fundamental principles which, rightly applied, he thought would result in benefiting not one, but every nation :

1st.—Let every Land and Nation produce in greatest abundance what nature, experience and science, show it can produce best and cheapest.

2nd.—Let there be free international exchange and co-operation in the distribution of these products. Then all the inhabitants of the world could obtain and enjoy some share of the good things the world contains and produces, even though their own country may be poor and cold and unproductive in many things desirable and essential, at the smallest possible cost.

If each nation will only energetically so produce and exchange, famine everywhere would become almost impossible, and food everywhere much more abundant, varied, and cheap, and toil less slavish.

High wages could be maintained from the increased production, hours of labour probably reduced and greater leisure secured for social and intellectual life.

Don't think life would be easy then! But it would certainly be easier and much more humane, and it should be our mission to make it so as far as possible.

As an example of how the spirit of co-operation and friendly rivalry works compared with aggressive hate.—Only let us look back on the History of our own country : Begin with the Highland Clans of Scotland—their cruelty and injustice to each other was heart-rending ; now they are brothers—all. Come to the bitter and bloody struggles between the English and the Scotch, and the English and the Welsh. Now we are Britons all, and together stand or fall—in things national.

With air service, electricity and steam, we are practically nearer most nations of the world now than were the North of Scotland men to the South of England men in the old coaching days.

We have great and difficult problems yet to solve among ourselves, but who would return to the old war-like state of things. Is there any reason why all the nations of the earth should not be at least on the same terms as we here are now ?

The moral law was given by Infinite Wisdom to enable man to make the best of life, alike for himself and for his neighbours. Free Trade seems to me in no way to run counter to it, but to harmonise with it, or I might have less faith in it.

The great element of uncertainty in this vision of reconstruction, as in all others—*is man—his very self*, whether rich or poor, educated or not, endowed with Free Will, inherently great and sinful.

Cain slew his brother Abel. "Wherefore slew he him?" "Because his own works were evil and his brother's good." What a reason!

Man is the same to-day, and therefore unreliable and dangerous, more or less, until he submits his will to the Divine, and even then, as our own hearts tell us, it is a poor service.

Speaking of the League of Nations, the present Ambassador of the United States, Mr. J. W. Davis, spoke as follows, at a banquet recently given in his honour in London:—

"This we may know certainly—this we may hold confidently—'that which is right can harm no man; that which is wrong can profit no man.' Though all other lights swing and circle, this is the Pole Star by which we steer.

"Since eternal vigilance is the price both of justice and liberty, we purpose to set up due safeguards for their maintenance. The armed doctrine of irresponsible power must give place in international, as it has in private affairs, to the rule of common right.

"Law must rise superior to brute force. The moral code must govern States as it governs men and the nations of the world must pledge this—each to each in mutual League and Covenant."

This is an inspiring and gladdening vision of the great ideals of the promoters of the League. That remarkable Statesman, President Wilson, and our own great and good men are in co-operation to make a living, practical reality of this vision, and the progress made is most remarkable and encouraging. This is a marvellous step in the reconstruction of the World. It is the inauguration of a higher standard of Government for all.—A standard of Right instead of the standard of Might. Organised Help instead of organised Hate, in short, a real attempt to establish Christ's standard instead of the World's.

He came, to bring Peace on earth and Goodwill to men.  
 He gave His life to do it.  
 He reconstructs through sacrifice;  
 He conquers sinners by His Love.

Rarely was the Club invited to approach the questions brought before it from so high a level as this, but now and again the religious instinct which is so deeply rooted in the rural mind—even although it may often find little outward

manifestation—would be apparent in the background of a thought or the turn of an expression.

On a different plane the following passage from a paper by Mr. Castell Wrey, entitled "Suspicion," sets an ideal:

For a moment I want to take you away from suspicion, and want you to imagine a youth walking down a street at about 9 o'clock, about to enter for the first time a business office, a bank. He is shown where to hang his hat and coat, and is then told that he is to be trusted with such and such work and trusted as a servant of the bank to do his duty in return for the salary to be paid to him. He starts with confidence because he has been told that he is trusted. I will not labour the question of his ultimate promotion, but all through his career he sees trust and confidence around him. There is confidence right through the institution, from the managing director to the newest office boy, and to the clients of the bank.

Why should not agriculture, the best, cleanest and healthiest of businesses, be run on similar lines of confidence and trust? Why should banks, a much later institution than agriculture, if the oldest book be the test, be run on different lines? For the Bible practically starts with the Garden of Eden, a form of small holding and fruit cultivation, and therefore a part of agriculture.

Frequently in the course of discussion a speaker would, more or less unconsciously, reveal the hopes and aspirations which lay in the background of his thoughts. Roseate visions were seen of a time when Agriculture should be again recognised by the whole people as the foundation of the structure of national life, when all the occupiers of land should be prosperous and all the workers happy and contented. Those golden ages of poetic fancy—

"Ere England's griefs began,  
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man,"

or when—

"None was for a party,  
Then all were for the State,"

were recalled. The touch of hard fact might chill the ardour of those who were addicted to poetry. The cold-blooded statistician might cavil at Goldsmith's calculation and point out that a quarter of an acre is a meagre allowance

for the maintenance of a man, and that if his statement were correct it would imply that at the time "ere England's grief began" the population of the country was about 120 million men. The historical sceptic distrusted Macaulay's assertion that even in Rome there was a time when none was for a party and was still more doubtful that such a period had occurred in English history. But statisticians and sceptics were not encouraged. The prevalent tone of the discussions was optimistic and charitable. Buoyant faith in the future prevailed, and confidence that the clouds would roll by and that, even if it were after much tribulation, we should in due time enter the kingdom of contentment and goodwill. The spirit of assured hope in a better time coming was especially evident in the outlook of those who spoke for Labour. Perhaps this was the more noticeable because it was *prima facie* the less to be expected. The history of the agricultural labourer has not tended to stimulate optimism. Its shadows have been unduly deepened by some recent writers, who have preferred to accentuate the hardships and overlook the alleviations of those who cultivate the soil. The troubles which the rural worker endured were often those which were common to all workers and were not attributable to any particular agricultural causes or to any unusual aggravation of the defects of human nature among farmers. But when all allowances are made, the impartial reader of history could feel no surprise if resentment and bitterness were felt by the descendants of those whose lot in the past had been hard and who inherited traditions which had fostered through many generations a sense of injustice. But the hope which in bye-gone days flickered in spite of all discouragement has flamed up in the present generation, and the worker's faith in the future has induced a more charitable view of the past. All concerned with the land have their ideals. The landowner looks forward to the day when all those who own agricultural land will be regarded by the State as trustees for the whole community and when all of them will be worthy of the trust and sensible of the responsibility it involves. The farmer looks forward to a time when he will be regarded as the friend and not the

enemy of the consumer, and when the nation will encourage and not discourage his enterprise. The labourer looks forward to a time when his interest as the predominant partner in the use of the land will be recognised and his share in the products of his toil will be admitted as a right and not granted as a favour.

The methods by which these ideals were to be realised varied widely. Some believed in political changes while at the same time they usually condemned present political activities. Others relied on converting the urban population, which decides the nation's policy, to an altruistic devotion to agricultural interests of which, it must be granted, it shows little sign at present. The earlier meetings of the Club were held during the war and the town-dwellers were for a time badly scared and, under the dread of starvation, made fervent protestations of a change of heart and vowed earnestly that in future they would make any sacrifices needful to stimulate food-production and encourage Agriculture. But—

“When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be,  
When the devil was well, the devil a saint was he.”—

Agriculturists continue to demonstrate, as a novel political theory, the personal interest which every town-dweller has in the prosperity of Agriculture. Their arguments are unanimously accepted by the gatherings of agriculturists to whom they are most commonly addressed. Even a town audience will receive them with applause, but their approval does not find expression in the ballot-box.

Faith in political action as a means of realising ideals was whole-hearted in only a few. Education, improvements of methods, better organisation, and above all, closer co-operation of all engaged in the industry were generally accepted as more hopeful agencies, and at least more certain in their action than the incalculable engine of politics. Indeed, though the Club included many who might be described as politicians, its usual attitude towards that much-criticised class could not fairly be described as adulatory.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PRACTICAL FARMING.

IN almost every discussion, whatever the subject, points of practice arose incidentally. This indeed was the inevitable consequence when the speakers were all themselves actively engaged in the business of Agriculture in one capacity or another. There were among the members of the Club, and sometimes among the visitors, a few agricultural drones (like the President), but the large majority were working bees and the influence of their occupation was apparent in their utterances. The occasions on which a subject directly bearing on farm practice was introduced were, however, few. In looking back this may be regretted, and had the Club continued it is probable that subjects of this kind might have been more frequently discussed. It would have been interesting to have debated such questions as the manuring of land, the management of horse labour, the care of a flock, the harvesting of a crop in a body where the point of view of the experienced farmer and of the skilled worker might have been equally expressed.

In a discussion arising on the subject of "The Worker's Share in Agriculture," a visitor (who afterwards joined as a member for a time of a District Wages Committee) made some remarks in the course of which he described himself as "a practical farmer," with the covert but unwarrantable suggestion that as such he occupied (as Mark Twain said of an honest politician) a "mighty lonesome position" in the meeting. He made an interesting contribution to the discussion, but evidently left unsaid a good deal that was in his mind, and he was asked to open a discussion at a subsequent meeting. His paper, however, dealt almost exclusively with wages and hours of labour, and condemned



with emphasis the evil machinations of the Agricultural Wages Board. It dealt in fact with the economics rather than the practice of Agriculture, and in that respect was somewhat disappointing in view of the fact that he is well known to be one of the largest and most successful farmers in Sussex.

Of the thirty-five individuals who opened discussions rather more than one-half were actively engaged in farming either as owner-occupiers or tenant farmers, while many other practical farmers took part in the proceedings.

At one of the earlier meetings Lord Bledisloe introduced the subject of "Pig-keeping." At that time (April, 1918) everything was looked at through war-time spectacles and the value of the pig under war conditions was naturally emphasised. Lord Bledisloe mentioned that within a few weeks between seven and eight thousand pounds had been raised in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to promote pig-keeping and potato-growing. Among the practical points which arose was that of the flooring of pig-styes. Lord Bledisloe favoured coarse concrete as better than bricks. Pigs did not slip on concrete, and bricks were liable to run into holes which held the manure. Mr. George Nicholls said that when he was earning 18s. a week he started with a pig and a quarter of an acre, gradually increasing to 3 acres. He thought brick flooring was good, but asphalt was better. Mr. Padwick suggested that hurdles stuffed with straw and a thatched roof made an effective sty. Captain Proby, who described himself as an amateur pig-keeper, said the pig was a greedy but also a hardy animal. He had watched pigs on the outskirts of woods in France and it was remarkable how they picked up a living in a hard winter.

In discussing the subject of "Industrial Farming," Mr. Orwin stated that the hedges on one side of the roads in Oxfordshire had been calculated as occupying 1,500 acres. If all unnecessary hedges were removed, another county might be added to England. The manager of a large estate in Nottinghamshire, who had pulled up hedges to facilitate steam cultivation, reckoned that he had added 200 acres to the estate.

Sir T. H. Middleton raised some practical questions in his paper on "Food Production in War and Peace," although in the main he dealt with the economic and political aspects of his subject. The following is a passage of special interest which has since been frequently quoted :—

Let us enquire how many persons 100 acres of land will feed for a year if put under different crops. First, as regards grass. We have in this country grass of varying quality, from the hill pasture producing 2 or 3 lb. of mutton per annum to the rich grazing pasture on which a bullock may put on 3-4 cwt. of live-weight per acre in the season. If we take very poor lowland pastures worth from 2s. 6d. to 5s. per acre for grazing, it will be found that they yield about 20 lb. of lean meat per annum ; a medium pasture, rented at from 15s. to 20s., according to the district, may be expected to produce about 100 lb. of meat, while a first-rate fattening pasture, rented at from 30s. to 40s., may produce as much as 200 lb. per acre per annum. If we take the produce of 100 acres of land of each description and assume that the meat produced is used skilfully in combination with other foods, and if by this method we calculate the total number of persons who could be supported on the produce of 100 acres for one year, we get the following figures :—

From the poor pasture	.	.	.	.	2-3 persons.
„ medium pasture	:	:	:	:	14-16 „
„ rich pasture	.	.	.	.	25-40 „

Now how do these figures compare with the produce of tillage land? Let us assume that we have 100 acres growing an average crop of wheat, that the tailings and damaged grain are used in cattle-feeding, and that the balance of the crop after providing seed amounts to about 29 bush. per acre. The produce of 100 acres of this wheat, if milled to 80 per cent., would yield food for 230 persons for a year, and if the milling were reduced to about the pre-war standard it would provide food for 200.

Making similar estimates for average crops of barley and oats, we should find that they provide food for from 160-180 persons per 100 acres.

Potatoes, which, by themselves, would be quite an unsuitable food, but which, in combination with a limited amount of grain and meat, are quite capable of maintaining a population in perfect health, are even more valuable from the standpoint of maintenance of a large population than the cereals. An ordinary 6-ton crop, after allowing 15 cwt. for seed and 10 per cent. for waste, should provide enough to feed 400 persons per 100 acres of land. We may next compare with these figures the value, as human food, of such crops as mangolds and meadow

hay. These cannot be used direct but must be employed in producing meat or milk. Assuming that they are used in meat production, a 20-ton mangold crop would produce food for 40 persons per 100 acres and a 30-cwt. crop of meadow hay would similarly provide for 14 persons. It will thus be seen that there is a wide range in value between our different farm crops when value is estimated in terms of production of human food.

A very interesting paper was read by Mr. R. R. Robbins on a subject which has hitherto received less attention—at any rate from farmers generally—than it merits, viz., “Intensive Culture,” which he defined as the production of fruit, vegetables, flowers, plants, trees, shrubs and seeds on a large or small scale, under glass or in the open. Mr. Robbins added :—

The amount of labour required per 100 acres for any of the purposes mentioned, as compared with the amount required per 100 acres for a well-managed mixed farm, is, I submit, sufficient justification for regarding them as forms of intensive culture. The following estimate of the number of men required per 100 acres on a well-managed holding, devoted to (a) mixed farming, (b) fruit and vegetables, (c) culture of fruit, vegetables, etc., under glass, may be of interest :—

(a) Mixed farming	.	.	.	.	.	3-5 men.
(b) Fruit and vegetables	.	.	.	.	.	20-30 „
(c) Glass	.	.	.	.	.	200-300 „

The following particulars given by Mr. Robbins of some of the main crops which are intensively cultivated are of permanent special interest :—

*Tomatoes.*—Less than half a century ago the tomato plant was grown only for decorative purposes in greenhouses, and the fruit was no more considered to be edible than is now the berry of the deadly nightshade. Who first discovered its nutritive properties I cannot say, but gradually a taste was acquired for it until a demand for it was created. This induced nurserymen to grow the plant for market purposes and eventually to build more houses for the cultivation of the crop. To-day there are probably upwards of 1,000 acres of glass devoted to tomato culture. An average crop under glass yields from 30-35 tons per acre per annum. The annual output, therefore, would be from 30,000-35,000 tons. In confirmation of these figures I may say that, in 1917, one Covent Garden firm alone distributed 11,000 tons of English-grown tomatoes—half the amount being distributed from a single London warehouse.

In 1918, one Covent Garden firm sold in four months 722,145 packages each containing 12 lb. tomatoes, or a total of 8,665,740 lb., and there are many other firms in London and the provincial towns where enormous quantities of this class of produce are sold. It is safe to say that the best customers for tomatoes, even at this year's high prices, have been the miners and munition workers.

*Cucumbers.*—At the time of which I have been speaking, these were packed in open chip punnets, and my informant remembers his first visit to London forty-two years ago, at the age of eleven, with the first two cucumbers grown that year. These realised 10s. each, and were about 10 in. long.

Prior to the war, many miles' run of greenhouses were used for cucumber growing, and these were consumed not only in the British Isles, but were sent in large quantities to Holland, Denmark, Germany and other European countries. So far as the home consumption of cucumbers is concerned it is estimated that for every cucumber consumed by the well-to-do, 500 are eaten by the working-classes. This fruit is particularly popular in the colliery districts, and I have seen it stated that an examination of the police court records for South Wales would show that cases of drunkenness decrease by at least 30 per cent. during the cucumber season.

An acre of glass devoted to cucumbers has been known to produce as much as 80 tons during the season. An average crop would probably be 60 to 70 tons.

*Grapes.*—Forty years ago grapes used to come to the market in punnets containing 2 to 3 lb. each. Some of the very best grapes came from Scotland, were collected at King's Cross, and carried on the head of a porter to Covent Garden.

Until thirty years ago, old grapes, at and after Christmas time, were unknown. They are now retained on the vines until the end of March and early April, when the new crop is about to commence. In this way this very nutritious and life-sustaining food is obtainable throughout the whole year, normally at very reasonable prices. Considerable quantities of English grapes are shipped to the United States.

The approximate weight of grapes grown under glass in England is 2,000–2,200 tons.

Equally interesting and striking figures could be given concerning the cultivation of flowers and plants under glass, but sufficient has been said, I think, to warrant the statement that the cultivation of crops under glass is an industry of national importance.

As regards labour employed in intensive culture, Mr. Robbins said :—

Just before the outbreak of the war, in July, 1914, on a holding of 315 acres or thereabouts, the firm with which I am connected had in their employ—

110 men	regularly	employed.
29 women	„	„
9 boys	„	„

and the wages paid have averaged from £25-£30 per acre for many years past. I know instances where these figures are exceeded, and I should imagine that the average figure paid for labour on a holding devoted to fruit and vegetables would be from £15-£20 per acre. Where the forcing of vegetables in winter is undertaken the employment provided is of a more regular character, and, generally speaking, the amount spent in wages per acre is higher. The forcing of rhubarb is, without doubt, the most considerable instance of the particular form of culture to which I refer. It is a speciality of the Leeds district, yet it is not confined to that area. The holdings devoted to rhubarb production in the Leeds district range from 3-100 acres in size. A special rhubarb train in normal times runs from Leeds to King's Cross to take supplies to the London markets. Rhubarb from Leeds is also carried in large quantities to Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. It is much appreciated, too, in the colliery districts of South Wales. It goes to Plymouth and to the Channel Isles, and it goes even to Hamburg for distribution to various places on the Continent. In the height of the season, i.e., February-March, 30 tons per day are dispatched to the London markets.

Asparagus, mushrooms and seakale are examples of other vegetables forced on a far larger scale than most people imagine. My firm has forced as much as 40 acres of the latter vegetable in one season before the war, and the average area devoted to it would be not less than 35 acres.

In the course of a discussion on "Milk Production," opened by Sir Archibald Weigall, Mr. A. Wadman, speaking as a large milk producer, said he had produced as much as 1,000 gallons per day from his herd. Milk was then sold as low as 6*d.* per gallon in May, the average price being about 8*d.* in summer to 10*d.* in winter. As he remarked, producers could not be accused of extortion even although they had a monopoly of the supply. In the same discussion, Mr. Wilfrid Buckley observed that it was possible to obtain clean milk from any byre if the cows were properly handled and the utensils properly cleaned

## CHAPTER V.

### AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS.

IT is only in recent years that the subject of agricultural economics has been seriously considered, or that any attempt has been made to systematise it. The term is still regarded with some distrust by many farmers, who do not appreciate the fact that the economics of Agriculture represent nothing more than the business side of farming. Like M. Jourdain, who had been talking prose all his life without knowing it, farmers talk economics all their lives unconsciously.

The business of Agriculture may be conducted—as it frequently is—with very little mental equipment other than the natural shrewdness of the man engaged in it. In matters of purchase and sale, in dealings with his fellow-men, the average farmer needs little instruction. The popular belief that the countryman is easily outwitted in a bargain by a smart townsman is held mainly by those who have not had dealings with him. He may be “bested” by superior knowledge of the course of the markets, or by reason of a too narrow outlook, but otherwise he does not usually give much away in a deal.

The basis of modern business is accounts, and here it must be admitted the farmer as a rule is antiquated. There is, no doubt, a rapidly growing appreciation of the advantages of a good system of book-keeping and the National Farmers' Union has thrown its influence into the movement in favour of the general keeping of proper accounts.

Arising out of the war and particularly out of some of the incidents in the later phases of Food Control, was what may now without disparagement be termed a craze for costing. When Lord Rhondda became Food Controller, the system of price control had been started, but it was

becoming evident that the policy of the Government—whether wisely or unwisely, a question which may be debatable—must lead to the fixing of prices for all the main articles of food. Lord Rhondda, therefore, quite rightly regarded this as his trump suit and laid his plans accordingly. An elaborate administrative machinery for costing was established, the theory being that for every article a fair price should be fixed, after detailed enquiry by skilled persons, based on cost of production plus a reasonable profit. A large amount of information of value to the Food Ministry was obtained, but it is not unfair to say that in practice it did not work out as well as in theory it should have done. At any rate this was so in the case of home-produced foods. The more detailed the enquiries the more they disclosed the extraordinary range of the figures purporting to represent cost of production, and in the end the actual prices fixed were necessarily arrived at on very broad grounds and on the basis of wide generalisations.

The comparative failure of these attempts at a scientific system directed prominent attention to the fact that farmers generally made no real attempt to ascertain the cost of producing a particular crop or a particular commodity such as meat or milk. They knew pretty accurately whether their business as a whole was paying or not (though characteristically they kept the knowledge to themselves) at any given time, but it was usually conducted on the principle that "what they lost on the swings they made up on the roundabouts."

Thus with full official approval, and indeed on official initiative, an Agricultural Costings Committee was set up with the main object of stimulating and assisting farmers to keep proper accounts on a cost basis, i.e., in such a manner that the costs of production are duly apportioned to the various items which are produced and sold.

Incidentally this Committee has some historic interest as one of the last attempts to establish a department for the whole of the United Kingdom. It comprised representatives—official and unofficial—of England and Wales, Scot-

land and Ireland and it aimed at, and for a time secured, the co-ordination of returns, obtained on a uniform basis, from all three countries.

The Agricultural Costings Committee existed for a sufficient time to construct an organisation which bid fair to produce valuable results, but it had barely got into full working order when it collapsed owing to the withdrawal of financial support. The responsibility for any attempts to stimulate the adoption of a system of agricultural costing was relegated to the Agricultural Departments, and for England and Wales was entrusted to the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics at Oxford under the expert control of Mr. Orwin.

In February, 1920, the Director of the Agricultural Costings Committee (Mr. H. G. Howell, F.C.A.) read a paper before the Club, which I give practically in full, not only for its historical interest—under the circumstances I have described—but because it states in a very clear and concise way the case for keeping farm accounts on the new system. The paper was entitled “Farm Accounts, Profits and Costs.”

As I have probably been invited to address you as a representative of the Agricultural Costings Committee, a few words as to the genesis and objects of the Committee will not be out of place.

In no department of our national life has the lack of reliable data of costs and profits been so much felt during the last few years as in the farming industry. The memory of it is fresh in all our minds. Had the information been available, bitter and misguided controversies would have been avoided; the course of many negotiations smoothed; and the whole attitude and relation of farmers and consumers towards each other would have been less suspicious and antagonistic than it is to-day. These suspicions breed on lack of knowledge of the facts.

The Costings Committee was formed to obtain the costs of production of items of farm produce affected by control of prices, and also to obtain permanent information of the costs and results of farming. This latter object was recognised as the larger and more important part of the work. In order to obtain these results over as wide an area as possible, the Committee promotes the keeping of farm accounts and cost





THE LORD AILWYN, K.C.V.O., K.B.E.  
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL CLUB

*Russell.*



records on uniform lines, which can be collated and compared, and the results of which will be of practical use to farmers, to the industry as a whole, and also from a national point of view.

The Committee includes representatives of producers and consumers. Its status is impartial and independent, and any information obtained is treated confidentially.

Detailed cost records of all farming operations are being kept on a large number of representative farms throughout the United Kingdom, and, where necessary, assistance is rendered by the Country Officers of the Committee to farmers who are keeping these records and who agree to make them available to the Committee.

Detailed costs of producing milk are being obtained on about 180 farms.

In addition to these detailed cost records, several hundreds of farm accounts showing the profit or loss on the year's working have been received and tabulated anonymously, and reports of the results have been published.

The Committee believes that the continued collection of information such as the above will prove of distinct service in many vital questions affecting the industry. It will, in addition to being available for national purposes, prove of educational value to individual farmers, and should increase efficiency and economy, and the better organisation of the financial side of farming.

#### *Farm Accounts.*

Few will deny that there is an urgent need for farm accounts to be kept on a much wider scale than hitherto. The industry as a whole has probably lost considerably both in money and efficiency by the prevailing neglect of farm book-keeping. There is on this subject a surprising unanimity in the reports of several Government Committees of Enquiry which have been instituted recently. Without exception they record the lack of information and urge the necessity for more and better account keeping.

It is not difficult to understand why farm book-keeping has been neglected in the past. The term book-keeping itself reeks of the town and the office and indoor work. The farming community has been proud of its isolation and distinctiveness from the town, and suspicious of all that is connoted by factories, ledgers and the like. It has maintained its high level of technical efficiency in the past without book-keeping assistance. The average farmer is an open-air man with a temperamental objection to account books, and with little time and less inclination to think about them.

This state of affairs, however, is an old and closed chapter.

All the circumstances are altered. Farming has not escaped the rapid flux and change which has been observable for a number of years, and has been accelerated during the last five. The increasing cost of all farming expenses ; the pressure of Income Tax Assessments ; increasing competition ; the development of transport, tending to bring town and country together—all of these combine to force the question of farm book-keeping to the front.

When speaking of farm accounts, I am not referring to the farmer's Bank Pass Book. If he is relying on that to know his financial position from time to time, he is unwise. The position disclosed by the Pass Book is too indefinite. Private transactions may be mixed up with those of the farm, obscuring the results ; amounts owing to and by the farm are not taken into account, nor differences in the amount of the valuation at the beginning and end of the year.

Most of the above objections apply equally if the kind of account relied on is one of cash receipts and payments only, without a valuation and without regard to the amounts owing.

A simple method of book-keeping for small or medium-sized farms is to use a cash book with several analysis columns on either side, and a farm diary. This method will enable the farmer to keep the private transactions separate, to account for all the monies he receives, and to verify the correctness of his cash book with the Bank Pass Book. At the end of the year the totals of the various analysis columns of the cash book are the foundation of his annual statement of account, in which will be entered the amounts owing to and by the farm at the end of the year, and the amount of the Inventory and Valuation. This plan is the simplest that will give efficient results, and in some cases, including the larger farms, more books will be necessary.

In all cases accounts are a valuable source of information, and in most cases they save money. One of the main objects in keeping accounts is that the farmer may know at regular intervals how he stands, and to what extent his farm is paying. Knowledge of the facts is the first step towards economy, and the proper control of expenses and of the whole financial side of the farm business.

The expenses of the farm can be divided into as many headings as is desired and a watch kept on each expense with a view to economy. The various sources of income can be similarly classified, and useful comparisons made from year to year.

Proper accounts will prevent the possibility of an account being paid twice ; will save trouble with disputed accounts ; and enable track to be kept of troublesome things such as sacks, over which a lot of money is lost every year. Further, if the

farmer wishes to obtain a loan from his banker, it is more easily arranged if he can produce a proper statement of account—and other advantages ensue.

The strongest inducement to account keeping may be mentioned last, i.e., liability for Income Tax Assessment. A farmer may now choose to be taxed on his profits instead of on the double rental, but in this event, he must produce accounts to the authorities. Though the great majority of farmers at present pay Income Tax on the rental basis, an increasing number are finding it necessary to ascertain their profits or losses from year to year, in order to have the information available for Income Tax purposes if necessary.

The practice of assessing Income Tax on farms according to the rental value has a long and interesting history. Farms were so assessed in the first Income Tax Act as far back as 1799, and the same basis has been continued in each subsequent Income Tax year. Scottish farmers enjoyed a preference in the way of a reduced rate of tax until the year 1894, whilst Irish farmers escaped any taxation for about 50 years, and then enjoyed the same privileges as Scotland.

#### *Farm Profits.*

Although by no means the only object, one of the objects of keeping accounts is to ascertain the result of the year's operations in the way of profit or loss. It is often thought that once the accounts have been made up and a resulting figure shown of profit or loss, that figure is a matter of fact about which there can be no dispute or difference of opinion. This is not so. Profit in most, if not all, cases is much more a matter of estimate and opinion and valuation than a matter of fact. Before accepting as correct the amount of profit shown by any account, it is necessary to consider the various steps by which that profit has been arrived at, and the questions of valuation, apportionment and principle that have been dealt with in arriving at the profit.

There are many reasons which account for the difficulty in settling the real figure of profit in a given case, and some of these will be briefly considered.

The period for which accounts are usually made up—12 months—is quite an arbitrary one. We are compelled for various practical reasons to show the results of farm operations at regular yearly intervals. It becomes important for many reasons, amongst which are profit-sharing schemes and assessments for Income Tax, that the profit should be allocated as correctly as possible to its proper year, and many of the difficulties arise through the necessity of doing this.

Again, some of the profits or expenses cover more than one

year. A case in point is the raising of cattle which are sold after, say, three years. If a profit eventually results on the sale, in what way should that profit be apportioned over the three years during which the stock was being raised? A valuation of the stock at market prices each year may or may not bring about this result, while if the stock is carried forward at cost price until sold, the whole of the profit will be shown in the third year.

An analogous case, on a larger scale, is that of a building contractor who contracts for a building, the erection of which will take three years. The practice in apportioning the profit in these cases varies. Sometimes the work is carried forward at cost and no profit is shown in the accounts until the building is completed. Or, again, some proportion of the profit may be taken credit for in each of the three years of construction, according to the progress of the work. But any such anticipation of the final profit is generally made on a most conservative basis. The comparison with the farm cattle differs in this respect, viz., that the contractor knows the final price he will receive on completion of the work, while the farmer does not know how the markets will stand when his stock is ready for sale. There is consequently greater need for him to be cautious in taking credit for any intermediate profits.

Again, expenditure may be incurred, the beneficial results of which will last for more than one year, such as laying hedges or drainage work. This outlay in ordinary cases should be written off in instalments over the period receiving the benefit. The benefit of cleaning the land and applying manures lasts for more than one year, but if the rotation is steady and the same cultivation and manuring is followed, these matters will average out.

As the farm is a going concern, there are at the end of any year a number of unfinished transactions. Many of the difficulties in arriving at a proper figure of profit would disappear if all the transactions had been completed and realised or paid in cash (say at the close of a farm tenancy). In practice this is impossible. All the operations of raising and selling the produce are going on continuously. The final results of these operations cannot be ascertained until they are realised in cash, and in the meantime they have to be valued, for the purpose of making up each annual account. This element of valuation is one of the chief factors involved, and there is wide scope, not only for differences of personal opinion, but also for different methods and principle to be applied in making the valuation.

These remarks do not deal with the preparation of the valuation. They assume that the valuation has been made, and discuss from an accounting point of view some general considerations

as to the bearing of the valuation on the profit or loss result shown by the accounts.

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the valuation in farm accounts, and it has an obvious bearing on the amount of profit which the accounts will show. The total amount of the valuation is generally greater than the gross income of the farm for the year.

*Two Classes of Stock.*—The various items of live and dead stock that are the subject of valuation at the end of each year are not all of the same character, and are not meant to serve the same purpose in the farm economy. This may affect the basis on which the two classes of stock are brought into the Accounts. In general terms, two distinct classes of stock are generally included in the valuation, which may be termed “Fixed” and “Circulating.”

*Fixed.*—Machinery and implements, work horses, breeding stock, etc. These are not intended to be sold but to remain on farm as the means of production for that farm. They are to that extent fixed or permanent or capital assets, and in their present or equivalent form they must always be employed on the farm while its present system of farming is continued. They will be referred to as “fixed assets.” They are the property *with* which the farm is carried on, and the essential point to remember is that they are retained for production purposes, and are not intended to be sold.

*Circulating.*—The other class is represented by the crops and live stock held for sale, miscellaneous stores of fertilisers, feeding stuffs, etc., and tillages. These are primarily meant to be *sold* and are not intended to remain on the farm. Some of the crops may be sold, not as crops, but in the form of the live stock to which they have been fed.

The first class has already been termed the fixed asset, and these may be correspondingly termed the “floating” or “circulating” assets, in that they are always circulating, i.e., when they are sold they are turned into cash—this cash in turn is used to purchase other live stock or to produce other crops and stock—these in turn will be again converted into cash, with which crops and stock will be again produced—and so the process continues during the whole tenancy. The point to remember is that they are intended for “circulation” or sale.

*Analogy of Industrial Concerns.*—The two classes of stock just mentioned correspond roughly with the fixed assets and the floating assets used in industrial concerns. The line of division between the two classes is not so clear in farming as in other industries, and in venturing to draw a comparison between farming and other industries, I am aware of the many essential differences involved.

An industrial concern does not value its fixed assets each year. There is no need to do this, as they are intended to remain on the ground in order to produce the goods sold. If at each year end the fluctuating values, according to the market, of land, buildings and plant were taken into the accounts, the accounts would to that extent show paper profits and unreal and variable results, and the true profit of the concern from making and selling its goods would be obscured.

The fixed assets are therefore kept apart as being the fixed capital of the concern. A regular yearly depreciation is written off this property according to its expected life, and this depreciation is included with the year's expenses.

The circulating assets, on the other hand, are valued each year, generally at cost (or at the market price if this is lower than cost).

To illustrate. Take the case of a company making farm implements. Before the concern can start operations it will need land, buildings, plant and machinery, etc., with which to make the implements. The cost of these fixed assets, when obtained, goes to Capital Account.

At the end of the first year's working a number of implements will have been sold, and a number will also be on hand in various stages of manufacture, together with stocks of the necessary raw material (iron or steel). These will represent part of the circulating assets, and before the year's profit or loss can be ascertained they must be given a value to put into the accounts. The expenses must also include the annual depreciation of the fixed assets referred to above; but except for this depreciation the annual Profit and Loss Account is not concerned with the value of the fixed or capital assets.

It will be seen that the fixed assets and the circulating assets are treated in different ways. The value of the circulating assets is brought into the Profit and Loss Account, while the fixed assets are not valued each year end, but their annual depreciation only is included with the expenses.

I have suggested that there may be two somewhat distinct classes of farm property, and have drawn an analogy with an industrial concern. It can be no more than an analogy. The dividing line between the two classes is not so clear in farming, where some of the work horses may be sold, and other changes in the "Personnel" of the fixed live stock, owing to death, disease, and other causes, occur from time to time. But there is sufficient difference between the two classes to suggest that they should not both be necessarily brought into the accounts each year on the same basis. The annual farm accounts should show the profit or loss arising, in the normal working operations of the farm, from the disposal of the crops and stock intended to be sold off the farm.



*Alternative Bases of Valuation.*—There are alternative bases on which the valuation may be taken, which need consideration.

All, or any, of the items in the valuation may be taken at cost price, or market price, or at something under market price, or at a fixed price, or on some other basis.

I will deal in detail with two of these—the Cost Basis, and the Market Basis.

*Cost Basis.*—By this method all the live and dead stock is carried forward in the accounts at its cost price until it is disposed of. The profit on any sale does not therefore appear in the accounts until the sale occurs. Until that time the movements of the market, whether up or down, are ignored in the accounts. This method corresponds most closely to those adopted by industrial concerns. It avoids the difficulties which are apt to occur, when market prices of unsold stock are put into the accounts and the market falls before they are ready for sale. But whatever merits this cost basis may possess very few farmers are able to adopt it, as the necessary information as to the cost is not available.

*Market Basis.*—This method is customary and in many ways convenient, especially when live stock is concerned, and it will probably remain the one most frequently adopted.

The effect of putting the market price of unsold produce into the accounts is that the produce is treated in effect as if it had been sold, and the accounts show the profit at the time the valuation is put in. The profit is thus anticipated before its actual realisation, and becomes for that year a paper profit. It is probable that some farmers have been paying Income Tax on profits which are not realised profits, but which arise from the upward movement of the market. Further, it is sometimes found in practice that owing, say, to corn threshing out badly, or damage being done by rats, or other similar causes, the valuation price is not realised, and in that event a loss ensues which has to be borne by the following year's account. The probability of this is of course lessened when, as is often the case, the valuation is made in a prudent and conservative manner, and temporary or abnormal fluctuations are discounted.

It will be seen that, even with the circulating assets which are intended to be sold, the insertion in the accounts of the market value of unsold produce tends to obscure the profit which is eventually realised in cash.

Commercial concerns, especially in trades where market prices are apt to fluctuate wildly, have found that the safest way of showing their profits is to carry the circulating assets at cost until they are actually sold, and to ignore in the accounts possible prices which the goods may fetch.

But whatever reasons of practical convenience may support the valuation of the "circulating" assets at market prices the position is not the same with the valuation of the "fixed" assets. Profits thus arising from the changing values of this fixed property are not only paper profits, but paper profits arising on fixed or capital assets which must remain on the farm. The earning efficiency of these assets is unaffected by market movements; they are kept on the farm to produce, the work-horses and implements producing the crops, the breeding stock their offspring—and the dairy herd also producing milk. This being so, their efficiency as producing instruments is the measure of their value to the farm as a going concern.

In the course of the proceedings of the present Royal Commission on Income Tax, reference was made to the fact of these changing "capital" values appearing as profits in farm accounts, and it was argued that it was therefore inequitable to assess farmers for Income Tax on the amount of the profits shown by the annual accounts, as they would thereby be paying tax not only on the true annual profits from the produce sold, but also on these capital profits, to which Income Tax was not meant to apply.

*Yearly Tenancies.*—It must be borne in mind that in England, at all events, most farms are let on a yearly tenancy, and with the increasing frequency with which estates are being sold and the risk of a notice to quit, it may be necessary for the occupier at short notice to realise even what have been termed the fixed assets.

It may be argued that these reasons make it unwise to assume that the farm will continue as a going concern, and that these fixed assets should, therefore, be valued in the same way as the stock, etc., intended for sale. But if for the "Fixed" Stock, cost less depreciation be adhered to as the basis, there is not much risk of a loss ensuing on realisation. Further, the great majority of farms in the past have not been subjected to interruption of their tenancies, and, in view of the promised legislation to give farmers increased security of tenure, I think the general considerations put forward above may stand.

At the end of the year there may be liabilities and contingencies—such as bad debts, dilapidations, decreased fertility, etc., for which it may be necessary to provide by making a reserve against the year's profit.

The necessary amount of depreciation to be written off the Live and Dead Stock (if these are not the subjects of a valuation) has also to be decided, and in practice this is often an important question.

In commercial concerns these reserves are more numerous and important than in farming.

The amount of profit to be reserved for all these purposes is largely a matter of personal opinion and prudence, or it may be, of policy, and these reserves afford a ready means of putting by secret reserves of profit and reducing the amount of profit disclosed in the accounts.

It is sometimes difficult to decide whether expenditure is in the nature of improvements or additions, or is for maintenance only.

Outlay on additions and improvements is an addition to the capital value.

Outlay on maintenance and repairs is a recurring expense which must be included in the expenses for each annual account. The dividing line, however, between the two classes of outlay is not always distinct.

Implements of improved quality or type and consequently of greater cost may be bought to replace others worn out. This may be treated in one case as a mere expense of renewal, to be included with the other annual expenses, while in another case the part of the increased cost arising from the better quality or improved type may be regarded as an addition to the capital value of the equipment.

Again, continued high farming would add to the value of the farm, though this increasing value would not be shown in the accounts, as each year's cost of cultivations, fertilisers, etc., would be treated as expenses of the year.

Another difficulty in arriving at the final figure of profit or loss on the farm is the dovetailing of the farm transactions with those of the household and the farmer personally, owing to the extent to which the farm is used and worked by the farmer and his family.

On the one hand the farmer receives benefit at the expense of the farm. Some of the farm produce is consumed by the household, and they occupy the farmhouse and garden, the rent for which is paid for in the farm rent.

On the other hand, the farmer and his family render services to the farm ; members of the family sometimes work on the farm without payment, and the farmer himself also contributes supervision and management, and sometimes labour.

These transactions do not involve the payment of cash, but in order to obtain accurate profit results, some at least of them should be given effect to in the accounts. Certain farmers may also desire to include with the expenses interest on the capital employed on the farm, before striking the final figure of profit.

Private income and expenditure, received and paid in cash, should always be excluded from the farm Profit and Loss Account.

It will be seen that in settling the profits quite a number of

questions of principle, as well as matters of valuation and estimate and personal opinion, have to be considered, and that consequently the determining of profits is a matter of real difficulty, which affords scope for wide variation of treatment and on which honest differences of opinion may exist without improper motives or ulterior objects being imputed.

### *Farm Costs.*

To distinguish these cost records from ordinary farm accounts, they may be defined as the detailed records showing the cost and result of each branch of the farm, as distinct from the ordinary farm financial account, which shows the profit or loss on the working of the farm as a whole.

The usual form of farm account does not show the profit or loss of each branch of the farm. Each item of expense appears in one total without showing which branch of the farm has received the benefit, and the final figure of profit is the over-all profit of the farm as a whole. This inclusive profit generally conceals a loss (perhaps an expected and necessary loss) on one or more departments.

One of the main objects of cost records is to show separately the cost, and profit or loss result, of each crop and class of stock, etc., and the records are obtained as follows:—

Part of the information from which these cost records may be prepared will already appear in the financial accounts, but some additional work is necessary.

1. The various expenses are split up and charged to the branch in respect of which they are incurred. Thus wages, according to its employment, will be apportioned to the various crops, live stock, etc.

2. Effect is also given to certain transactions that do not appear in the Cash Book. These are various "internal" transactions, not involving money payment, in respect of mutual services rendered by one branch of the farm to another, e.g., home-grown crops fed to the stock, labour of work horses on the crops, manure produced by the live stock for use on the land, etc.

3. Certain of the expenses (e.g., for cleaning land and for certain manures), the benefit of which extends over more than one year or crop, are divided over the various crops as accurately as possible, according to the benefit which each receives. Suitable forms are used to record these "internal" transactions, the most important of which are the daily employment of the labour, and the consumption of the farm produce by the stock.

In rough, broad outlines, this is how the cost of each crop and class of live stock is ascertained. The corresponding income

of each branch is known and the difference is the profit or loss. The aggregate amount of these profits or losses should agree with the over-all profit in the financial accounts.

Farm cost records require care, and while the regular records to be kept through the year are fairly simple, the closing work to get at the final cost is more difficult. The natural harmony of the rotation introduces difficulties, as does the analysis of the "internal" transactions between the different branches and the rotation course, and questions of principle arise which affect the basis of the cost records.

It must be admitted that many farmers have not the requisite time or ability to keep costs without assistance. But if, as is hoped, groups of farmers in the near future combine to employ a clerk or accountant to keep their records this difficulty will be overcome.

To enable the farmer to apply his practical knowledge in the fullest and most efficient manner, he must have the relevant facts before him, from which to adapt and vary his policy to meet the constantly changing conditions of markets, prices, seasons, etc., within the limits of his rotation.

The essential advantage of farm costs is as a means of information; they are a means and not an end. There is no virtue in the figures unless they are used. Unless they are carefully studied and the information they contain is practically applied, they are of little use. They cannot take the place of practical farming knowledge, but they enable that knowledge to be applied to the farm more fully and accurately. They bring to light the detailed inner working of each branch of the farm.

So far from stereotyping any system of farm management, they should facilitate the most elastic methods and assist in obtaining full efficiency in all the operations, and they become of increasing value when several years' costs are available for comparison.

Farming is a complex industry. In the coming days competition will be keen, and margins of profit fine. Each item of expense incurred, in every department of the farm, will assume importance and require oversight. The whole economy of the farm will need to be organised and controlled on the basis of reliable information, and cost accounts provide the material for this purpose. In the rush of changing conditions which affects every factor in the farm working, accurate information will be essential.

In cases where cost accounts have been instituted, they have upset preconceived notions as to the relative advantage of different branches of the farm. Stock that, in the absence of cost accounts, were thought to be paying well, have been found to be yielding little or nothing.

It is not intended that the result in profit or loss, say, of sheep or roots, is the only criterion to apply. One eye must be kept on the cash return, and the other on the fertility of the land and the effects on the farm generally. Farm operations are interdependent, and the relation and the benefit of that branch to all the others must also be considered. These practical considerations will always be uppermost in the farmer's mind.

In addition to finding the total cost of producing any crop or class of stock, he can also ascertain the detailed items making up the total cost in each case. Comparisons of these figures from year to year, or from farm to farm, will afford useful information. The cost of various operations will be available; the cost and effectiveness of horse labour can be compared with tractor work; information is obtained as to the number of actual working days of the horses during the year, as well as much further information that should assist in the farm management.

The information afforded by keeping milk costs may be mentioned as an example. Two convenient units of cost are available, one being the gallon and the other the cow-day. The various items of cost such as grazing, other home-grown foods, purchased foods, labour, etc., can be easily worked out at so much per gallon or per cow-day. The cost and the quantities of alternative rations can be ascertained, the comparative advantages of using silos is shown, as well as the effect on the costs of improving the pastures, etc., while, if desired, the cost of producing milk in the summer period and the winter period can be ascertained.

In the discussion which followed the reading of this paper Mr. Orwin observed that if Agriculture was to hold its own the farmer must know more of costing than he had known in the past. During the period of agricultural depression many farmers would have been saved from disaster if they had had accounts to guide them. They might have to meet a similar position at the present time. There had been a period of prosperity during the war and possibly that would now pass away. With adequate records, however, farmers would be able to direct themselves into profitable lines of management.

Speaking from the workers' point of view Mr. Denton Woodhead remarked that if farmers had kept some system of accounts in the past the work of the Agricultural Wages Board would have been simplified. They were told that the

farmer could not afford to pay increased wages, but there were no data on which to base their arguments. He thought that if farmers could be persuaded or compelled to keep accounts of receipts and payments as a first step then accounts in further detail could be introduced later more easily. The farming industry would certainly benefit thereby.

On the other hand Mr. W. S. Miller as a farmer was not clear that a case had been made out. He thought it might be interesting to know what a field produces and what an animal brings, but to keep the accounts required would mean one man's whole-time employment. There was no firm foundation on which to build a system of accounts and it only wanted a turn in the market to cause the whole basis to be upset. In 1872 he took a farm when wool was selling at 2s. a lb. and sheep at 60s. each. In the spring of 1873 they were worth less than half that figure and since then he had sold wool for 3½d. a pound. Did they think farmers could not see their own way? He would back the smallest farmer against any accountant. The farmer knew what paid him and what did not. The whole conditions of Agriculture were so unstable that costing was mere guess-work. In any case they could draw no conclusions from one year's accounts but must have them for a series of at least ten years before they could be of any use.

Mr. Rea, however, also speaking from the farmer's point of view, said he felt very strongly the truth of Mr. Howell's contentions. A farmer might shortly be required to pay taxes on double his rental and he did not think he could possibly do that without being out of pocket. The small farmers in his district were in a number of cases keeping accounts with the help of the village schoolmaster. This plan was not always successful, but a real interest was being taken in the subject at the present time. It would have been better if costing accounts had been started years ago. Evidence before the Income Tax Commission had shown the wide variation in the valuation of farms, due to the inexperience of farmers in this matter, but that would disappear with the introduction of a system of accounts.

He thought it was certain that in future farmers would be taxed on Schedule D and not on Schedule B and that would mean taxation either on profits from actual accounts or on a hypothetical figure submitted by a surveyor. Such a position would render it necessary for a farmer to keep accurate accounts.

Mr. Hewitt, as a smallholder, thought there were difficulties but that the younger men would be prepared to take up the system.

Mr. F. D. Acland emphasised the necessity of having accurate figures and records, otherwise the farmers would never be able to convince the general public of their case. He admitted it was a difficult matter to ask the farmer to undertake as it would mean a good deal of accurate record keeping. There was a Bill coming before Parliament which would guarantee certain prices for agricultural products. The Bill would be attacked very strongly by the party which was now gaining strength in the country and unless farmers were able and willing to produce cost accounts showing the financial position of the industry then it was certain that things would go badly with Agriculture. It was to the interest of every one concerned to lend a hand to establish a system of costing. This, combined with an extension of co-operation, was of the utmost importance to Agriculture and the work now being done in that direction should make a big difference. He hoped the farmers would regard the proposed system favourably and would realise the importance of this matter both to themselves and to the community.

Subjects coming within the scope of agricultural economics continually cropped up. One paper dealt with the marketing of one of the staple crops, viz., wheat. It approached the subject from the standpoint of world production and was entitled, "Realities of the Wheat Position at Home and Abroad." The reader—Captain R. T. Hinckes—has given very careful attention to the subject. He examined the present position of wheat-growing in the United States, Canada, Australia, India, Argentina, and Russia under five headings, viz. :—



- (1) Climatic conditions and cost of production.
- (2) Economic conditions.
- (3) System of land tenure.
- (4) Transport facilities.
- (5) Market conditions.

In summing up his detailed examination Captain Hinckes presented the following balance of plus and minus advantages of the foreign and home grower :—

Overseas Wheat Grower.	Home Wheat Grower.
+ Quality—"Strong" wheat.	— Quality—"Weak" wheat.
+ Low rates and taxes.	— High rates, taxes and tithe.
+ Cheap labour (large fields, machinery effective).	— Dear labour (small fields, machinery ineffective).
+ Credit system (loans on machinery).	— Credit system.
+ Grading facilities.	— Grading facilities.
— Heavy transport cost to market.	+ On market.
— Low yield.	+ Steady and high yield.
— Straw, little or no value.	+ Straw, very valuable.
— Wheat, with fallows every second or third year.	+ Grown as a rotation crop.

The value of the straw is a great pull for the home producer. It is one of the reasons why every farmer grows some wheat.

And, in conclusion, Captain Hinckes emphasised his opinion that—

The greatest hope of increasing the wheat cultivation of these islands is by better marketing methods. With better marketing methods there will be some incentive to the farmer to grow better wheats. He added—Another equally important point is the revival of local milling. High railway rates will assist in this direction. By local milling you link up wheat-growing with the rearing of live stock. We now make most of our offals at the port mills. If we could assist the corn grower by cleaning and grading his wheat and grinding it at the local mill, we should have gone a long way towards removing the handicaps which certainly do exist with regard to wheat-growing as compared with other branches of agriculture. Throughout the bad times the farmer relied on his special markets for barley, oats, meat and dairy produce. These special markets saved him from the worst effects of foreign competition in wheat and other products. I do not think you can expect him to throw over these products

for wheat-growing. In my opinion the real object of our wheat policy should be to make the most of home-grown supplies as a counter-agent for checking speculation in foreign markets.

Mr. R. V. Lennard, in a well-considered paper on "Agricultural Development and National Welfare," read in October, 1918, made the following general observations on the economic aspects of agricultural policy :—

Agriculture, like every other form of economic activity, aims, or should aim, primarily, at obtaining the largest possible return in useful commodities for the smallest possible expenditure of energy. This is not the same thing as saying that the object of agriculture is the maximum of profit, for profit may mean simply profit for the employer, and the maximum of profit in this sense may be obtained at the expense of persons other than the employer and may be the result of low wages or low rents or high prices. To put it vulgarly and roughly, a sound economic policy means getting the largest quantity of food with the least sweat. That this is, from the economic point of view, sound policy has been determined by the common sense of mankind, and though the applications of the principle are frequently misunderstood, its fundamental truth is implicitly admitted by everybody. For if you reject the principle, you are immediately involved in absurdity. If, for example, it is urged that industries should aim, not at the maximum return for the labour and capital invested on them, but at providing work for the largest number of persons, all technical improvements and inventions must be condemned, for these improvements and inventions are all devices for obtaining a larger return with less work. The point is so obvious that it need not be laboured. The man who denies the truth of the principle ought logically to advocate a law forbidding the use of labour-saving machinery and favour a policy of cultivating wild and desolate moorlands instead of good farming land. But though the validity of the general principle is obvious, its implications are often overlooked. It is frequently assumed that the wisdom or unwisdom of a particular agricultural policy can be determined by purely agricultural considerations. Many people, while they would admit the folly of growing tomatoes on Ben Nevis, are sufficiently inconsistent to believe that, once it is proved that the land will yield more than it does, it follows as a matter of course that it ought to be more intensively cultivated than it is, and even that it would be sound economic policy to grow the largest possible crops irrespective of the outlay such a policy would require. Nor are opinions of this type confined to the more

hare-brained land reformers. Lord Milner has used somewhat rash language on this subject. In evidence before Lord Selborne's Committee he stated that 'obviously, from the point of view of National Economy, it was bad policy to have land yielding £4 worth of produce an acre if it could yield £8, or even £6 worth.' Such language either shows a complete misunderstanding of the whole problem or it assumes so many unexpressed qualifications that it deserves condemnation for its liability to be misunderstood.

The real position can perhaps be illustrated by a parable. Mr. Jones, a farmer, has two farms, both of them to some degree undercultivated. He receives a legacy of £500, and he decides to invest it in the development of his land. Now ought he to spend all the money on the one farm, merely because even the last penny of it so spent will increase the crops grown on that farm and add to the income he obtains from it? Would he not rather, if he is a wise man, consider first the possibilities of the other farm, for it may very well be the case that he will get a higher percentage on his capital if he spends, say, £300 of it on the first farm and £200 on the second? If he limits his outlook to one farm only and assumes that the increase of his crops and his income proves the wisdom of his decision to invest the whole of the legacy in that farm, he may be throwing part of his money away. For clearly a man who invests part of his money badly so that it brings in less than it might is no better off than the man who has less money but invests it so well that it yields as good an income as the other man gets from his somewhat larger capital.

It was well to have the economic point of view put thus lucidly by an eminent economist and it cannot be too often emphasised. By constant reiteration a fallacy is apt to become current as a truism, but the bald proposition, so popular at agricultural meetings, that the economic interests of farmers and the national interests are identical is unwarranted. The national interest in Agriculture is two-fold, viz. :

1. To secure the maximum output of produce from the land.
2. To maintain the maximum population on the land.

The economic interests of the individuals who occupy agricultural land do not necessarily involve the attainment of either of these objects. The law of Diminishing Returns governs the farmer, and, speaking generally, it may be said

with regard to most crops that the point at which the maximum of profitable production is reached is much below the point of possible production. Similarly the economic interest of the farmer is not to employ the largest possible amount of manual labour, but, on the contrary, to obtain the largest output at the least expenditure both of capital and labour.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A BUSINESS PROPOSITION.

CLEARLY coming under the heading of Agricultural Economics was a paper read at one of the early meetings of the Club (June, 1918) by Mr. J. H. Guy, then Assistant Financial Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions. It was entitled, "British Agriculture as a Business Proposition," and its special interest lay in the fact that the reader was an American, regarding Agriculture in this country with an alien but very keen eye, trained to acute observation on the other side of the Atlantic. For this reason I reproduce the paper in full :—

Frankly, I am quite sorry that I consented to address a club of specialists on this subject, because I find that all I have learned of the industrial side of farming is of doubtful applicability in England. I am therefore compelled to dwell on your basic conditions as they affect the farming business, rather than on the particular phase with which I am familiar.

I was walking over a large estate with the owner a few weeks ago, and was told that some of the cottages cost £400, and were rented at 3s. per week. The rent was clearly uneconomic, but it was explained that a good man must have a good home, and a good home necessitated a good house, and it was a landlord's duty to supply the same, regardless of economics. Of course, the true meaning was obvious. The labourer received less than his earnings in cash, and the balance was paid in kind. But the results are far-reaching. In effect, the landlord keeps a grip on a part of his labourer's income, and insists on its application to house rent; floating capital, save the landlord's, is driven away from rural cottages; a bad landlord may withhold this portion of the labourer's earnings, and a good landlord can have the luxury of benevolence by giving his labourer no more than his just earnings.

These things may be good or bad, but they give a flavour to the business of farming in England something akin to the

fourth dimension. Its existence is indicated, but one never feels quite sure of its reality. If it is real, it should be easy to answer two simple questions—What is the business? and Who is running it? I am quite baffled in getting a definite answer to either question.

Common sense would indicate that farming is the business of producing, for a profit, certain kinds of food, with such by-products as wool and hides. But so direct and simple an answer by no means satisfies the many cooks who stir the agricultural broth.

To go no farther than the discussion in this Club a few weeks ago, following Mr. Orwin's very interesting address in favour of large farms, there was first a lament because there has been a reduction in the number of agricultural workers which Mr. Orwin's plan would accentuate, and it was assumed as axiomatic that an increased number of workers was in itself a desirable thing. Quite the reverse would be assumed in any other industry. If England could mine her 250,000,000 tons of coal and iron with 500,000 people instead of 700,000 that would be considered a good performance as an economic proposition, as it would leave 200,000 available for additional production in other lines, and increase exportable surplus. Not so in farming. There are many who think that national well-being requires a numerous agricultural population, and this is specifically set forth by the Sub-Committee on Agricultural Policy as a prime objective. There was also introduced into the same discussion the broad social doctrine of the nationalisation of the land, not apparently because it was the best way to make farming pay, but as a sound doctrine in itself. There was also a demand for a highway to social advancement for the agricultural labourer, not observably in the interest of farmers or farming, but again as a social doctrine and an end in itself. And all these were apparently held to be relevant to the discussion of a plan to make farming profitable to the operator.

To an industrial manager like myself, it was like attending a meeting where every speaker used a different language, with Mr. Orwin my only compatriot.

Compare this with a commercial undertaking. There we have a simple direct aim—the profit of the holder of ordinary shares. Every transaction is judged by that one standard. The purchase of materials and the employment of labour must be as cheap as possible. Interest on borrowed money must be low; sales price must be as high as possible; and finally no profits must be paid to anyone else if it can be avoided. To meet this last point the tendency is to reach back through all processes to the raw material, and forward through all processes to the ultimate consumer. It is true that the word

“cheap” must be interpreted in a spirit of enlightened self-interest. The lowest-priced labour is very rarely the cheapest, and the longest hours are not the most productive. But the objective is quite clear—to make profit for the ordinary shares—and it is the creed of many of us that the more intelligently this object is pursued the more easily can it be reconciled with the rising standards of social obligation.

In farming the fundamental objectives are much confused, and for the moment at least the British people seem inclined to conduct Agriculture as an insurance against a submarine siege of these islands, as a nursery of manhood, and as a pension scheme for the returning soldier by giving him a strip of land for which he has fought. However desirable these things may be, they are not intrinsically business propositions, though they can be reconciled with business—at a price. If we grant the premise that farming is to be conducted for profit pure and simple, I would concur whole-heartedly in the application of the factory system to the farm, and would accept the conclusion as to farm labour that our choice lies between five labourers at £1 per week and two labourers properly equipped and directed at £3 per week—and rural depopulation be hanged. I shall, however, assume for the purpose of this discussion that any policy to command wide approval in this country, must effect a reconciliation between pure business and certain State requirements.

I find, unfortunately, that this is only the beginning of an answer to the simple question—What is farming? The precise place which is given to the several objectives, determines the fundamental character of the industry. The most important of these is the degree to which safe food is to take precedence over cheap food. For several generations cheap food has been absolutely dominant, but under the stress of war there has been a complete reversal to safe food. When the alarums of war have subsided the safe food policy may become a very moderate programme, and it may again be necessary for the land to sell her fair face for the pleasure of the industrial magnate, because her honest housewifery cannot compete with that of younger countries. Arable may again diminish and pasture increase, and you may continue to depend on the incoming ships for daily food.

The first essential of an agricultural business policy must be for the industry itself to frame a proposal to submit to the State defining in precise terms what it is prepared to do to meet national requirements, and the price. Consider for a moment the Corn Production Act. To an industrial manager, it would appear that the farmers are treated, and treat themselves, as helpless victims of blind economic forces, and it is

the State which is taking the initiative in plans, and the burden of administration. And there is no real evidence that any other method is possible. To what organised body could the Government go for a guarantee that production would in fact be increased in an adequate degree for the money which it was prepared to spend? The result is a minimum price for corn which violates several important business principles, and involves a measure of Government control tolerable only during war.

Contrast this with the case of the Ministry of Munitions securing a forced and uneconomical output in the metal trades. By expert advice the Ministry ascertains a fair price which will produce a certain amount of output under ordinary trade conditions. Still greater quantities are required and the trade undertakes its production at a higher price for the increase, such higher price being based on the increased cost due to using semi-obsolete equipment. Further production is required and new plants are necessary which will be redundant after the war, and a price is fixed accurately measured by the higher depreciation on the war plant. A specific return is guaranteed for a specific payment, such payment being measured accurately by the degree of violation of economy necessitated by the war demands. Where the industry is not organised, it has had to submit to Government control, with a loss to both sides due to divided interests and responsibility. If this one point could be brought home to the farming community, and they realised fully the annoyances of control, it should prove a very strong inducement to organise politically and industrially. The State, I am sure, would greatly prefer to deal with such an organisation rather than assume control. I have seen no evidence of the desire on the part of the much abused civil servant and so-called bureaucrat to reach out into new fields except with great reluctance. On the other hand, the somewhat proud statement of the writers of the Agricultural Policy Report that the ownership of land is vested only in the landlords, and that in dealing with them the State knows exactly where it is and whom to hold responsible, is not altogether borne out by the situation revealed when definite action has to be taken.

There can be no satisfactory reorganisation plan which leaves the most important measures to be settled in the political arena. It is, therefore, the first duty of the industry to present a reasonable proposition to the State, and to undertake to return a guaranteed minimum of production for a stated price. As to the price it is easy to state the basis. It must represent the ascertained offset to the unequal conditions of cheap land and virgin soil, as on the American continent, and sweated labour, as in Russia, less the cost of transport. It must not be a mere



protection of inefficiency. This is vaguely recognised, but there is no sufficient assurance to the taxpayer that he is not being charged for incompetence, and it is bound to lead to a reopening of questions which would vitally effect any business policy.

Take a parallel with commerce. To increase sales, extra commissions and prizes are often given; but if sales were £1,000,000 per annum and the bonus offered were a flat 5 per cent. on all sales, no board of directors would face the risk of £50,000 dead loss before one extra sale was secured. If £100,000 increase of sales were secured an instant calculation would be made by every member of the board that the extra £100,000 of sales has cost £55,000 in additional sales expense. This course is, nevertheless, the one chosen by the Government, and this obvious criticism will be very generally made when peace returns. Some recognition must be made of the ability of certain lands to compete with little or no subsidy, and margin created for a high subsidy on less fertile lands. It is also essential that the Government assistance be asked for only so long as, and to the degree that, the unequal conditions exist.

As to a guaranteed minimum production in return for the subsidy, there is at present no one to give and enforce the guarantee because there is no effective general management of the industry, and the obvious remedy is to create one. Unless the farming community is prepared to appoint a body from its own numbers, independent of the State, to make such a proposition, and to guarantee a valuable return to the State, there is only the alternative of State control to secure increased production.

There is also another unsettled point of primary importance in arriving at what farming is. That is the ideal, variously referred to as the reservoir or nursery of manhood, the back-to-the-land movement, or in its more prosaic form, a large home market for manufactures; and finally, in its negative form, as rural depopulation. A reservoir of healthy and contented men and women is the phrase used by the Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee, and a more nebulous phrase on which to build a business policy one can hardly conceive. It leaves entirely in doubt whether we are to plan for large units, each equipped with a rounded organisation of accountant, purchasing agent, sales manager and the like; or whether we are to plan for auxiliary common services for small units. On the basis of pure economics and open competition the larger unit must win, but if the creation of a large body of well-rounded business men is the ideal then again the industry must approach the State, name a price, justify its basis and guarantee a result. I am inclined to think that English sentiment tends towards the small unit with common services, and that any specific measures of business policy must be adapted to that end. But

you will observe that the only answer I have been able to secure to my opening question "What is Farming?" has been one assumption on top of another.

The other question—"Who is Running the Industry?"—brings equally indefinite results. The landlords apparently claim to do so; but, when the matter is put to the test, the State has to take charge in default of any responsible body, and so we have the Food Production Department, the Agricultural Organisation Society, and other public or quasi-public bodies taking the place of an association of the industry.

It is reasonably evident to me that there are no definite answers to the two questions I have put, and that the fundamental character of the industry is still to be bandied about as an incident of fiscal and political controversies, with precedence to the noisiest.

The reorganisation of farming, like every other reorganisation, must absolutely settle three basic conditions to secure success:—

1. A management vested with authority commensurate with responsibility.
2. A dominant objective to give unity to the industry.
3. A policy of management which reconciles the parties at interest, and gives reasonable assurance of a profit to the operators.

All three are singularly lacking in the present conduct of English Agriculture, and no provision has yet been made for their establishment. In the prosperous days of English farming all three were present. If I read English history correctly, the management was a solid body of landlords with political power amply sufficient to discharge their responsibility to the interests they represented. The dominant objective was the profit of the landlords, who saw to it that the profit was sufficient to enable them to reconcile the parties at interest by meeting the social requirements of the time—to farmer, labourer and the State. It is by no means necessary that the same management, or the same main objective, should be restored to secure success. I can readily imagine several variations. But it is certain that the tide of prosperity will depend for its height and duration on the exact degree to which these conditions are met.

As to a dominant objective it is impossible within reasonable limits of time to examine the consequences of more than one, and I submit some considerations arising under a plan of management aiming at "a reasonable profit to the farmer." All other aims I shall judge in the light of their effect on this single interest. I wish to make it clear that I express no opinion as to whether this is the right objective; I merely state that it is impossible to frame a sound business policy directed to several partially conflicting aims, and that I have selected one intelligent objective.

Others which might be given first place, and which would require quite different policies and bodies of management, are: (a) The profit of the owner of the land; (b) the home production of all food; and (c) the maximum agricultural population.

I venture to suggest to the Chairman that he should call on exponents of these policies to test the effect of giving them first place and see what offers they could make to other interests.

I turn now to specific proposals to be incorporated in a business policy, which would first and always secure a reasonable profit to the farmer, and give due consideration to all other claimants for admission into reorganised business.

For this purpose we need in front of us a profit and loss account to guide us in examining the effect of the claims of the parties at interest, and I have constructed a rough statement of this character. (Tables I, II and III.)

The first criticism against farm management is on the part of the State. The State claims, with justice, that the output is an ill-balanced and sparse diet for over 35,000,000 people, about £3 10s. worth of food per capita per annum at farm prices, and part of that goes to city horses and for brewing. The balance required has naturally to be made up by imports, of which it is estimated that perhaps £200,000,000 (1913 values) could have been raised on English farms.

I will not further labour the point that the first task is to form a body of farmers, with paid executives, for the purpose of preparing and supervising a plan to produce this additional food. The possibility of transforming the Food Production Department into a Farmers' Association at the close of the war is a Heaven-sent opportunity which should not be missed. The flexibility necessary to success can only be secured by the industry itself. I have seen this year chalk hills ploughed up at a great expense, when half the cost expended on more fertile fields within a mile would have produced in extra crops much more than the total yield of the chalk hills. And such examples could be multiplied indefinitely.

The price to be charged, and the general character of the organisation to secure this increased production, belong to the commercial side of the industry, and these I have discussed, but the methods of its production belong to the technical phase, and I shall therefore pass to the next business question—Who is to get the benefit of the increased production? For this I am compelled to present another table (II). Here I have assumed that the output of 1907 is doubled, that is, an addition of £127,000,000, which I understand is well within the realm of possibilities. I have made arbitrary additions to the 1907 figures, keeping within the amount of imports, on each item.

In the distribution of the proceeds I have assumed that the

farmers have organised and are entitled to any increased net return.

Labour remains at the same percentage, though, of course, double in amount. In actual practice, the percentage may be higher, due to forced production, and this will give one of the measures for arriving at a proper subsidy. The main point, however, is the rent. The farmers may well say we will continue to pay the same rent as at present, and will get our reward on the decreased percentage for this item.

We are told that there was a loss of £834,000,000 in the capital value of the lands of Great Britain between 1875 and 1904. Making a proportionate allowance for Scotland, this would leave approximately £700,000,000 in England and Wales, and would be comparable with the output in these two tables. Who can doubt that an income return on this £700,000,000 will be imposed on the agricultural reorganisation plan, if there is any chance to do so ; it is in fact in progress of imposition. At 5 per cent. on this capital the change would be 25 per cent. on the increase I have assumed. The threat of this imposition strikes at the foundation of any organisation of farmers as business men. It appears to me that there are two, and only two, ways of securing a business-like solution. The first is for the landlords to operate the farms direct, and the other is for the farmers to buy out the landlords. Both solutions imply a scrapping of the elaborate paraphernalia of Land Courts, allowances to outgoing tenants, and erudite discussion about the three F's. The remedy is a Land Purchase Act giving the cultivator of the soil facilities and the right to purchase. The essential to business policy is that management and ownership shall run together. Imagine Swan & Edgar's at the corner of Piccadilly Circus exposing themselves to a revision of rent based on their earnings every seven years. No staple industry in the world except Agriculture has been attempted on such a basis. It may be urged that landlords are considerate and neighbourly and do not take their pound of flesh. Such an intolerable position would have been ended long ago if they had. But in America we have decided that the potential ability to injure is almost as vicious as actual injury, and our anti-trust laws have been interpreted accordingly. It is intolerable to manhood that the upbuilding of years shall periodically be placed in another man's hands "to touch and remit after the use of kings." Ten thousand kings would upset any business. The English genius for compromise had made it work passably well at times, but it is my opinion that those times have passed. If farmers are to develop their scattered units into an organised industry, the threat of this undefined mortgage on their labours must be removed. If landlords are to organise the business, it is essential that they

should reap their reward in the form of increased rental or return on capital, and their profit and loss account would then be as in Table III. It will be observed that in Table II the farmer theoretically gets double the return that he would in Table III, and in practice this would, I think, be substantially true in time.

This matter is also of overwhelming importance to labour. The economic future of labour depends on the application of scientific management on the farm, standardised conditions, standardised operations, despatching, standards of performance, and an efficiency-reward.

An interesting pamphlet by Mr. T. B. Ponsonby is the only farm literature I have seen on the subject, but the matter has received much study in commerce and we have learnt by our mistakes. Mr. Ponsonby barely mentions standardised conditions, but this is the root of the matter. If peace-work, bonus schemes, stints, differential rates, or any other form of efficiency-reward, is based on existing conditions, any improvement that involves capital or effort on the part of the farmer must be paid for by a reduction in bonus rate, though not in weekly total, and then the trouble begins. How can equipment be standardised under the English system of land tenure? I have seen farms where a very large part of all labour was obviously wasted by the bad arrangement of buildings and equipment, and a considerable expense would be necessary to cure it, but I doubt whether a new tenant who never made time-studies of each operation would pay *1d.* extra in rent. My wife informs me that each meal prepared in our house in England takes  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times the running about that it did in our American home, 300 ft. against 80 for afternoon tea for example, and she has properly scaled charts which have passed expert criticism, to prove her point. But there is no cure. Our temporary residence here would not justify pulling about scullery, pantry and kitchen, and the landlord would not find one person in ten who would pay for the rearrangement until after a period of occupancy. I examined last year time-studies in painting shell. In 25 establishments the labour hours per thousand shell varied as 5 to 1. The worst took five times as long as the best. The cure lay first in the arrangement of benches and machines, smoothing of floors and minor changes of that character, and second in instruction. There was little visible improvement in the physical equipment, but there was doubled efficiency shown in the reduction of cost and increased earnings to the workers. In the last year I have seen dozens of startling improvements of this character, most of which would have been stultified under a tenancy system.

The farm labourer lies under a burden of unintelligent and

unnecessary chores (jobs), rendered inevitable by this extraordinary system of separating management from ownership.

The farm labourer has much in common with the famous tramp who was willing to work for his breakfast, but went without rather than pile the firewood on the other side of the yard for no earthly benefit. Useless work strikes at the soul. Every hour of every day that is happening on most of the farms of England. And that leads naturally to the subject of cost account. It may comfort you to know that only 10 per cent. of American industry has any cost accounts. Competent opinion added to my own unrivalled facilities for information on this matter leads me to believe that in England there is less than 5 per cent. In Germany it is 90 per cent. The paramount importance of cost accounts for the improvement of farming as a business, combined with the fact that it is one of few subjects not fogged by unsettled basic conditions, make the matter one of present practical interest. The trouble in the way of general application is the unfortunate fact that farm cost accounts present great technical difficulties. As a practical accountant, I do not believe that farmers will ever master the subject, and probably would not be justified in giving the time necessary to do so. Any accounts they are likely to keep would fail to reveal so many factors, that the accounts would mislead as often as they would correct his judgment.

My only hope lies in the recent development of machinery which renders possible centralised accounting from simple basis returns like time-cards, milk-weights and feed-tickets. This is not the time and place to discuss the technique, but I expect to see its use in England despite the difficulty of cumbersome weights and measures. The real trouble will be to induce farmers to make any returns, but that will probably be less difficult than to educate them in the intricacies of cost accounts. The choice is between a course that is psychologically difficult and one which seems to me intrinsically impossible.

The commercial side of farming, that is the buying and selling of requirements and output, is of immediate practical importance, but here, again, a satisfactory solution is impossible, until we have a more definite answer to my question—"Who is running the business?" I will, however, present a few thoughts applicable to the problem whether the answer is landlord or farmer.

If we turn to my first table, the output in 1907 is shown as £127,000,000, and the value of the farms in England and Wales was apparently £700,000,000, and farmers' capital has been estimated at 40 per cent. that of the landlords. But placing the two together at £700,000,000 the relation of capital

to gross output is over 500 per cent. The relation to net output, that is gross output less purchases, is nearly 800 per cent. against 115 per cent. as the average of English industry, exclusive of Agriculture. In a typical trade connected with farming, that of the feed and fertiliser merchants, the merchants state that the relation is about 12½ per cent., which means they turn over their capital eight times a year and the farm once in eight years. The high relation of capital to turnover is the first important fact on the financial side of farming. The second is that the farmer stands between the upper and nether millstones of commerce, in a peculiar degree. We all have the upper eternally rubbing us, but it does not grind because we can generally pass the price on to the customer. But the farmer has no distributing machinery and he cannot do this. I must again appeal to a table to illustrate the point (Table IV).

That is, a purchase starts from the factory at 53 and gets on to the farm at 105, and a sale starts off the farm at 1s. 2¼d., and gets to the consumer at 2s. 2¼d. The farmer pays double costs and receives half the sales prices. Of course, there are legitimate expenses in between, but the facts contain a moral and constitute the second important point. The third I draw from another of my dull tables—the manufacturing activities of the Industrial Co-operative Movement (Table V). From this it will be seen that over two-thirds of the total is composed of dressing the farmer's product. The summary of the three points is this:—

The farming industry requires to turn over its capital more frequently, to control its purchasing and distributing machinery so that it can pass on its fair and reasonable costs to the consumer, and to cease paying profits to every unwelcome interloper who can manage to intrude between the factory and the farm, and between the farm and the consumer. This can only be done by capital combined with expert management, and I am round to my starting point "where is the management?"

Lest it be said that I give only destructive criticism, I furnish a table (Table VI) which contains the idea of a real business of farming. The figures can be filled in when my original simple questions are answered. The first column should contain the gross return from farming as paid by the consumer; the second, retailing costs only, no profits to middlemen; the third, the costs of bacon factories, slaughter-houses and wholesaling operations; the fourth, the cost of imported wheat and meat, by which I imply that the way to control foreign competition is to take a profit on its milling and slaughtering; and the last column is to contain the value of home farm products based on an intelligent understanding of costs.

If you will study the departments of Food Production and

TABLE I.—ESTIMATED FARM PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT (ENGLAND AND WALES): 1907 FIGURES.

<i>Outgoings.</i>		<i>Receipts.</i>	
	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>Per cent. of Sales.</i>
Labour	30,000,000	Farm crops sold off Farm	40,200,000
Feed and fertilisers	24,000,000	Animals	50,800,000
Rent	22,000,000	Dairy produce	25,500,000
Imported cattle for feeding	6,000,000	Fruit, flowers and timber	4,700,000
Implements	3,000,000	Poultry	4,350,000
		Wool	2,100,000
Balance for miscellaneous expenses for interest on farmer's capital and for farmer's labour	85,000,000		
	42,650,000		
	<u>£127,650,000</u>		<u>£127,650,000</u>
			100

*Authorities:—*

- For Sales of £127,650,000 receipts . . . . . Cd. 6277, page 25.  
 Labour £30,000,000 . . . . . Private returns covering about a dozen farms. The figure is not adequately proved as there is obviously great variation. The figure used, however, checks clearly with the persons engaged in agriculture at the known wage rates.
- Feeds and fertilisers . . . . . Cd. 6277, pages 26 and 28-30, checked also with Board of Trade Returns.  
 Imported cattle . . . . . Cd. 6277.  
 Implements . . . . . Various official figures and personal knowledge of the trade.



Food Control and the A.W.S., I am inclined to think there is a fighting chance for farmers to control their own business.

In conclusion, I commend to the attention of farmers that simple instrument, the funnel. The wide end should be at our pockets when we receive, the narrow end when we pay—not the reverse as at present.

## APPENDIX.

Some of the figures in the tables below are very rough approximations, and are used in the text merely to show tendencies, as in the case of rent, which in Table I (p. 62) is shown as £22,000,000 and 17·3 per cent. of the sales. In Table II it is shown at the same figure in money, but is only 8·6 per cent. of the estimated increased sales. This is to indicate the manner in which the farmers would gain through increased volume, if the rent could be fixed.

No conclusion is drawn in the text except from official figures.

TABLE II.—FARMER ORGANISING.

<i>Expenses.</i>	<i>Per cent.</i>		<i>Sales.</i>	
	<i>Millions. of Sales.</i>		<i>Millions.</i>	
	<i>£</i>			<i>£</i>
Labour . . . . .	60	23·5	Crops . . . . .	105
Feed and fertilisers . . . . .	48	18·8	Animals . . . . .	95
Rent . . . . .	22	8·6	Dairy produce . . . . .	36
Cattle for feeding . . . . .	12	4·7	Fruit, etc. . . . .	5
Implements . . . . .	6	2·3	Poultry . . . . .	12
	<hr/>	<hr/>		<hr/>
Farmer . . . . .	148	57·9	Wool . . . . .	2
	107	42·1		
	<hr/>	<hr/>		<hr/>
	£255	100		£255

£251 per farmer.

£190 per farmer on assumption of 10 per cent. of sales for miscellaneous expenses and interest on capital.

Previous figures arbitrarily increased as to sales for an assumed increase—see text.

TABLE III.—LANDLORD ORGANISING.

	<i>Millions.</i>	<i>Per cent. of Sales.</i>
	<i>£</i>	
Labour . . . . .	60	23·5
Feed and fertiliser . . . . .	48	18·8
Cattle for feeding . . . . .	12	4·7
Implements . . . . .	6	2·3
*Farmer . . . . .	43	16·7
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	169	66·0
Landlord for return on capital and organisation expenses . . . . .	86	34·0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	255	100

\*£100 per farmer.

Table with the same assumed increase as in Table II, arranged to show what landlords might expect if they organised the industry.

TABLE IV.—PURCHASE OF IMPLEMENTS.

		SALE OF MILK.	
		<i>Per Gal.</i>	
		<i>s. d.</i>	
	<i>Per cent.</i>		
Manufacturing cost . . . . .	53	Farm price . . . . .	1 2 $\frac{3}{4}$
Selling expenses . . . . .	22	Carriage to wholesaler . . . . .	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
Collection expenses . . . . .	5	Wholesale cost . . . . .	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bad debts . . . . .	3	"    profit . . . . .	$\frac{1}{2}$
Administration . . . . .	2	Carriage to retailer . . . . .	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
Profit . . . . .	15	Retailer's costs . . . . .	6
	—	Profit . . . . .	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Manufacturer's price . . . . .	100		—
	—		2 2 $\frac{3}{4}$
Local agent's commission . . . . .	5		

American figures. The author is his own authority, with ample opportunity for knowledge.

These figures are on excellent authority, but the author does not feel at liberty to quote the source.

£

TABLE V.—PURCHASES AND SALES.

6,083,163 . . . . .	Bread-making and confectionery.
5,980,265 . . . . .	Corn and corn milling.
5,258,399 . . . . .	Slaughtering and other foods.
3,942,095 . . . . .	Textile clothing manufacturers.
2,291,570 . . . . .	Other manufacturing processes.
778,335 . . . . .	Quarrying and constructional work.
467,967 . . . . .	Agricultural departments.

24,801,794

Published reports of industrial co-operation societies, 1912.

TABLE VI.—FARM OUTPUT AS A BUSINESS.

Commodity.	Retail Price.	Cost of Farmers' Retail Society.	Cost of Farmers' Wholesale and Manufacturing Society.	Cost of Imported Purchases.	Farm Price and Profits on Imports.
Crops . . . . .					
Animals . . . . .					
Dairy produce . . . . .					
Fruit, flowers, and timber . . . . .					
Poultry . . . . .					
Wool . . . . .					
	Total . . . . .				

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE EDUCATIONALIST.

It is an old saying that every Englishman thinks himself a judge of a horse. This may perhaps partly account for the prosperity of bookmakers. However this may be, it is certainly true that most Englishmen are educationalists and have theories on the subject of education, although happily very few have an opportunity of putting their theories to a practical test.

It was, therefore, significant, as it was fortunate, that at the very first meeting of the Club the subject of education was introduced by one whose qualifications to deal with it from an agricultural standpoint are indubitable. Sir Daniel Hall inaugurated the Club with an address on "The Training of the Rural Worker in the Operations of the Farm." He remarked that the skilled men who were an asset of incalculable importance were nearly all old or elderly, and it was a common complaint among farmers that there was little prospect that their places would be filled by the younger generation. The problem was how to provide for the continuance of this craft excellence in the future. At that time (April, 1918) the Education Bill providing for compulsory attendance at continuation schools was before Parliament, and Sir Daniel Hall expressed the opinion that it might prove to be of great value to Agriculture. He had been astonished in Kent, when he had taught school children for two or three hours a week, at their keenness and intelligence, but four or five years later he found that their minds had hardened and their intelligence had disappeared. Having left school at fourteen they had received no further mental guidance or stimulus.

This wastage of human material, to which Sir Daniel Hall

drew attention, cannot be denied. It happens since then that I, in connection with the Village Club Movement, have received ample testimony that, in all parts of the country, people who are concerned with the future of the rural population recognise this complete cessation of any kind of mental or intellectual activity after leaving school as the root of the evil. Here and there, of course, there are exceptions, and it is quite true that "the career is open to the talents," as it has always been to the boy who has within himself the necessary ambition and determination. For the few who possess an inborn zeal for knowledge there are thousands who need encouragement or stimulus, at the impressionable age when habits are formed. Not long ago an experienced teacher in rural schools put the point vividly in the statement that most of the children when they left school could neither read nor write. They had, of course, acquired the mechanical ability to translate printed characters into words and to set down sentences on paper, but they were unable to read with understanding or to express any thoughts of their own in writing.

Sir Daniel Hall discussed the question whether a continuation school should have a "vocational" value and, if so, what form it should take. Should it, he asked, take the form of craft education? Should teachers teach ploughing, hedging, draining, thatching, and dairy work? Farmers said, "We want boys prepared for our work and made useful; we look to the continuation schools to teach the work they will have to do on the farm." The alternative was the old method, crafts taught by men themselves skilled in them. The boy on a farm was put to work on the land and learnt his job from the man, but there was no formal education. They slowly learnt their job. This was the old and natural way. Another view advanced very often was, "As we are so short of skilled labour we must get a new race of skilled labourer."

Districts that had gone out of plough had now come back and there was no one to teach ploughing unless the school would teach them. It was said, "Boys are not anxious to learn country work." He had seen this reluctance on the

part of boys to take up skilled occupations. For instance, there had been a sheep-shearing class, and, although the instruction was free, the boys did not think it worth while; it was impossible to get two or three, although it was quite clear that if they learnt they could add to their wages. Such apathy was largely due to the feeling that the job was a dead end and led nowhere and the boy meant to get off the farm at the first opportunity. The reward was not good enough to make it worth while staying, and so many drifted to Canada.

It was agreed that we wanted the boy trained in manual occupations, thatching, etc. Who was going to do the job—the farmer, the workman or the continuation school? The continuation school ought to have nothing to do with that class of instruction; it would either be incompetent or very expensive. Who would go to the village schoolmaster to learn ploughing?

It was said, "We must have ploughing instructions. Bring a skilled man to the school to teach." The moment you try to organise teaching in gangs, everything breaks down. They must learn by seeing operations done and then holding the plough themselves; they must be taught by the man who says, "It's done this way."

Any attempt to teach in schools would be very expensive or very ineffective.

The farmer must be encouraged to teach boys. English farmers had been unskilled in handling labour; they had taken it grumbling but had not taught it. The best farmers had thought about it.

We must not give in to the apparently sound cry of teaching the practical side in the continuation school.

Was there anything we could teach young agriculturists? What could we do? We must think broadly, and keep the boy and girl intelligent beings, stimulate them to make the best of themselves.

If we took Denmark as an enlightened farming community—they had no system of technical instruction superior to that of England. The difference was in the better education of the general mass. Their high schools were not

devoted to technical instruction, but they kindled interest in history and like subjects which made the mind active and made a man able to apply intelligence to his own business. He would look round and see where he could be taught.

A sketch of subjects he had got out for continuation schools included the life of a plant, and a course of elementary physiology of man and animal, ventilation, food values and calories. On the other side weighing, measuring, drawing, taking out contents of stacks, elementary instruction in machinery.

These are only a few points in an illuminating address which aroused great interest and led to a good discussion. In the course of it Mr. Duncan, the Secretary of the Scottish Farm Workers' Union, said that in Scotland the labourers took great interest in ploughing matches and themselves organised them. Although they had a better system of general education in Scotland than in England, there was a similar difficulty in keeping men on the land. Mr. Dallas quoted Lord Haldane as saying that a teacher at a German technical school taught every subject except that which the student was going in for, and urged that if labourers were paid well and housed well there would, in a few years, be a better type of farm worker. Mr. Patterson, from the farmer's point of view, said that farmers should take a greater interest in the way men did their work.

It was somewhat curious that at the first meeting of the Club Sir Daniel Hall should refer to the Danish educational system, and at the last meeting (June, 1921) an address by Mr. Nugent Harris should include the following description of it :—

The scheme of education for Agricultural life in Denmark includes :—

- (1) Rural Elementary Schools.
- (2) People's High Schools.
- (3) Agricultural Schools.
- (4) Rural Schools of Household Economics.
- (5) Special Schools for small holders.

Each would furnish a subject for a separate address. I should, however, like to briefly touch upon the People's High School Movement which has played such an important part in Denmark's

success. The ideas and principles on which these High Schools are established were conceived in the brain of one of Denmark's many great sons—Bishop Grundtvig—born 1783, died 1872. He was a Goliath amongst the makers of modern Denmark. He admired England greatly, and owed much of his inspiration to her.

As Roussau fought for childhood, so Grundtvig fought for youth. He pleaded for the recognition of the value of youth as of intrinsic value in itself. Education, he pleaded, should not confine itself to books. It should develop executive power, and create that right public opinion which is the most potent factor in the proper solution of all political and social questions. He recognised that book-learning was important up to a point, but it was by no means everything; that a nation would never get the right ideas of education until it definitely understood that a man may be well trained in book-learning and yet in the proper sense of the word, and for all practical purposes, be utterly uneducated, while a man of comparatively little book-learning may, nevertheless, in essentials have a good education. He was, however, as he puts it, far from being a "book-learned" man. He both loved and hated books; loved them because they built a bridge over to the life of the past, hated them because they built a barrier between the reader and the life of the present. We never find him either claiming to be a master in his profession, or aspiring towards perfection in form. Poetry to him was the language of the heart, and through it he expressed the enthusiasm and idealism of his life. It is truly said of him that out of his dreams a world arose, and this world was the People's High School movement.

Underlying the High School idea are the following great principles, viz., that the transition years between childhood and manhood and womanhood are the least favourable for intellectual influences and indeed for intellectual activity, and that the years from 18 to 25 cover the period when young people are most receptive to intellectual influences. Grundtvig held that childhood should be regarded as one stage of development, and that the education given during that period should be allowed to ripen during the years of adolescence until the child had become a man or woman, and had passed through a time of practical experience, and then should begin a new period of preparation for life. This preparation should be not book-learning, but instruction that would bring inspiration into the daily lives of the common people and make them worth more to themselves and to their country. In other words, to drive home the old, old fact that "man does not live by bread alone."

These schools are of a voluntary character and are for young men and women between the ages of 18 and 25, who generally

pass five winter months and three summer months respectively under the influences of the "living word" of the teachers, and of congenial comradeship. They have their mental horizons widened and their life is lifted on to a higher plane. From these schools have sprung the agricultural schools, the pupils of which are of the same age, and come to the schools with a considerable knowledge of farming. There are about 80 High Schools and 20 Agricultural Schools in the country. To these schools not only peasant farmers, but agricultural labourers go in winter to study history, literature, political economy, hygiene, and many things besides. Every year some ten thousand students, a good third of whom are agricultural labourers, spend the "dead" months in the High Schools and they all spread the light when they are back in their villages, for they try, by lecturing and leading debates, to teach their comrades what the school professors have taught them. These debates are an unfailing source of delight to many of the peasants among whom they do a wonderful work, not only brightening their wits, but keeping alive their interest in things outside their village.

Sir Daniel Hall's point that the worker could only properly acquire a "vocational" education by working on the land and learning from those who were themselves skilled, came up again before the Club a year later, when Sir Arthur Hazlerigg introduced the subject of "Apprenticeship in Agriculture." In a characteristic exordium he observed :—

I apologise before I begin for the defects of this Paper, but I've never read a Paper before and would not have done so now but for the fact that when I sent in my name as a member of this Club (merely for the purpose of listening to others' superior wisdom) I ventured to suggest that the subject of training youths and others to become skilled agricultural labourers might provide an interesting topic of discussion. Your Chairman immediately replied agreeing with my suggestion, and asking me to read a Paper on the subject: he may have meant it kindly (at least I will give him the benefit of the doubt)—anyhow, there seemed to be nothing for me to do but accept.

The reasons for my suggesting the subject were two :—

- (1) That when I was asked to act as Chairman of the Leicestershire and Rutland District Wages Committee, I at once asked what the definition of an agricultural labourer was without getting any satisfactory reply. (Since then it appears to have been decided that any ordinary, able-bodied man is an "Agricultural Labourer.")



- (2) That on reading the Corn Production Act through there was a reference made in it to Apprentices, and that aroused my curiosity.

After referring to the difficulties of Agriculture and the attitude of the Government, Sir Arthur Hazlerigg expressed the opinion that "the labourer must be trained and his skill must be greater," and this could be in some degree secured by a system of apprenticeship for Agricultural Labourers. He continued :—

The history of apprenticeship is an old and interesting one : The apprentices or learners were bound to their masters or teachers for a period of seven years. The practice was started on the Continent of Europe about the eleventh century, but only became gradually introduced into England, where our ancestors—like ourselves to-day—were wont to look with suspicion upon anything which might be thought to restrain trade and freedom.

At the end of seven years the apprentices were skilled and highly qualified and were able, in their turn, to become teachers.

This system became compulsory in many trades, and meant the exclusion of all other men from these trades ; it was therefore vigorously attacked by Adam Smith and others, and there was much justice in some of their contentions. They urged that the institution interfered with the property which every man ought to have in his own labour, and interfered not only with the liberty of the workman, but with that of such as might wish to employ him, who were the best judges of his qualifications. They further argued that such laws tended to restrain competition to a much smaller number than would otherwise enter a trade ; and that a long apprenticeship or indeed any at all was unnecessary (I think some of these people must have been in some employ equivalent to the Government munition factories) ; that, if a workman was from the outset paid the full price of his work under deduction of such materials as he might spoil from careless use or inexperience he would learn his work more effectually, and would be more apt to acquire habits of attention and industry than by working under a teacher who had a right to share in the produce of his labour.

It is undoubted that under the old laws and the old system many abuses had grown up, but taking all these at their worst, it would hardly justify the sweeping charges brought against the system.

It is not conceivable that an institution which for centuries found acceptance in every part of Europe should have had no better justification than the greed of master workmen.

The law was at last abolished, but that has not led, as Smith and others thought it would lead, to the abolition of the system, which, on the contrary, has continued to flourish on the voluntary basis, as the public were not long in discovering that the regularly trained workman was the only one whose work could be relied on.

It is not easy to see why those principles of monopoly, based upon ascertained proficiency, which are so rigorously enforced in the learned professions, should not have some application at least in the case of workmen. It is also worthy of notice that the rise of Trades Unions was coincident with the fall of the old trade corporation—thus indicating that certain classes of workmen felt the necessity for some more powerful and orderly protection than the mere operation of supply and demand.

For these and other reasons I believe that few practical men would to-day deny the advantages of apprenticeship, for while no one would advocate the restoration of the old guilds with their exclusive privileges, many would incline to advise the institution of some order or degree by which a workman who has passed through an apprenticeship might be distinguished from those who have not done so.

As far as Agriculture is concerned, the teaching should of course begin at school, and every country school and all new town schools, where possible, should have a garden, where boys and girls could be encouraged to learn the rudiments of horticulture at least.

Anyone on leaving school, who wished for such training, should be apprenticed on good farms such as we hope the Government demonstration farms will be (when they are started), or to certain farmers who were helping with demonstration areas, and certain other farms where a high standard was reached.

If the Minister of Education wishes to insist on every one staying at school till they are 16, schools where practical Agriculture is taught must be provided.

The course should last certainly not less than five years, and the minimum wage should not apply until a lad has passed out of his apprenticeship, but when he did pass out, he should be entitled to a higher wage than the ordinary labourer on the land, who had not done so.

There should be no fixed graduation at each birthday as at present, as no one can say that it is fair that a lad, who has never known anything about Agriculture before, should be given a certain wage just because he is a certain age.

A wage should, however, be fixed for an apprentice, whether he begins at 14 or 17, increasing as he becomes skilled.

An apprentice who began at 14 should get the full certificated skilled man's wage at the end of his apprenticeship—probably

19—but no other class should be entitled to the full minimum wage until the age of 21.

I should prefer a wage being given from the day a boy starts his apprenticeship rather than after three months : and I should give facilities for anyone who is older than the ordinary apprentice and who wishes to do so, to go in for apprenticeship just now, and would also like to make his course a little more rapid, if possible.

If the scheme was worked out with proper safeguards, the result would be an annual supply of reliable young men, who knew their work and took an interest in it.

Their knowledge would be good for themselves and good for their employers : they would raise the standard of labour—they would by their proficiency reduce the cost of production, they would add to the dignity of the labourer's position : no good employer would grudge them a good wage, and they would have every prospect of getting on in Agriculture. At present there are fewer good labourers than for many years.

I have taken apprenticeship as applied to the labourer—not because I wished to single out that class of agriculturist but merely because when I first thought of the subject it was the training of the labourer which I had in mind : mostly, I suppose, because it had been so obvious during the last year or two that a man who has not been trained to the work is not able (even with the best will in the world) to do his fair share in getting the best out of the land or stock or horses.

But it would be of great interest to me if others were to follow up the subject : as most of us who are connected with the land ought to know more about it, and if you, sir, would get, say, Mr. Edwards, to read us a paper on the training of a good farmer, or some leading spirit of the Farmers' Union would oblige with a paper on what constitutes a good landlord it would do good, and we should all be better for an ideal to aspire to.

Perhaps I have been more fortunate than some, but as far as my experience goes I find that there is a much better understanding and more good-fellowship between all the classes who have an interest in Agriculture than there appears to be in certain other industries : the land, to my mind, is apt to make one patient, and the contact with nature makes for a spirit of reasonableness which seems absent in many pursuits.

In the course of the discussion on this paper the workers' representatives made some specially interesting observations. Mr. George Nicholls said he had for many years urged farmers to encourage lads to make themselves efficient

and to give them some incentive to do so. He had asked, "If there was some system by which lads could obtain a certificate or diploma and become better than the average, would you be prepared to pay them extra?" The reply was always the same, "The difficulty is that if you give one lad more than another you upset all the others." Mr. Nicholls said that in his opinion it was the farmer who would be most upset. He got a bad time from his fellow farmers if they discovered he was paying higher wages than they did.

Sir Arthur Hazlerigg took up this point and remarked that it was a very difficult thing to pay a skilled man more than others. He had once agreed to pay some skilled men 3s. a week more than the others, but he would never try the experiment again. He had only recently heard of a farmer who would have willingly paid his horseman 3s. a week more but dared not do so because of the other men.

The fact is that in this lies one of the fundamental difficulties of dealing with agricultural wages. In the manifold criticism of the policy and administration of the Agricultural Wages Board an objection was very commonly made that they had set up a "flat rate," and that under the minimum wage system every man had to be paid the same whether skilled or unskilled. There was just enough truth in the allegation to make it plausible. It was true that any man who was taken on, even temporarily, however unskilled or incompetent, could claim to be paid the minimum wage if he was physically and mentally sound. This defect in the system arose from the inflexibility of a single section in the Corn Production Act, which could have been amended in a few words. To cite it as an argument against the principle of a minimum wage obviously could only arise from confusion of thought. As a matter of fact, however, the accusation that the Agricultural Wages Board introduced a "flat rate" was inaccurate. The minimum rates varied both for age and skill in as great or even greater degree than they had varied before the war. Agricultural wages from time immemorial had been flat rates. Except for temporary men and for men who were deficient mentally or physically the rate of wages in a county or district had been uniform.

The shepherd, the stockman, or the horse-keeper might receive a slightly higher wage or an allowance or perquisite (such as a cottage), but generally speaking this represented remuneration for harder work or longer hours and not for extra skill. Mr. George Nicholls, in this same discussion, mentioned that when he was a horse-keeper he had spent more than he could afford on books to get knowledge about horses, but however much he learnt, or whatever skill he possessed, he got no more wages than the man on the next farm, who took no interest in his work.

This question of payment for ability or skill is worthy of very serious consideration. It has been common in the past to say that the experienced agricultural worker is highly skilled. I have often said so myself, and I have frequently quoted the well-known saying of Mr. W. C. Little that "an Agricultural labourer is a man who draws parallel lines across a field with an awkward instrument called a plough and two or three still more awkward instruments called horses." The progress of Agriculture, and the modernisation of its methods, must necessitate more and more the possession of a high degree of skill in the farm worker. Increasing use of machinery, greater variety of crops, wider application of the lessons of science, all involve a raising of the standard of technical skill. As industries become more and more specialised and mass production extends, the technical skill of the artisan may be restricted within very narrow limits. His work may be reduced to the endless repetition of one operation. The farm worker, on the other hand, except on very large holdings where a specialised staff may to some extent be possible, must be able to perform many and varied duties and become proficient in all.

If this is so the long-standing tradition of a flat rate cannot fairly be maintained, and payment for ability and skill must be recognised as equitable both by employers and workers.

The maintenance of the principle of a flat rate is frequently attributed to the class loyalty of farmers, and it is no doubt true that an employer who attempts to diverge from the

generally recognised practice is regarded by his fellows very much as trade unionists regard "blacklegs." But it is also true that the workers themselves object to discrimination, and in this objection they are supported by their Unions. The objection does not arise from mere stupidity; like the attitude of the farmers it is based on a feeling of class loyalty, and it is futile to condemn in one class what is approved by another.

It is a problem which requires attention by the leaders both of the employers and workers, and it may well be that if a satisfactory system of agricultural apprenticeship could be established a step would be taken towards its solution.

The subject bristles with difficulties. The Agricultural Wages Board gave a good deal of consideration to it at various times and set up a Committee, which, however, made little progress. A small step in the direction of establishing the principle was taken by making a differentiation in the minimum rates for boys who had had no previous experience in Agriculture, and it is possible that in due time the Board might have gone farther in the same direction.

From the workers' point of view it was argued that farm boys had paid for their apprenticeship in the low wages they received. Mr. Hewitt, for example, stated that he served his apprenticeship earning 6s. 6d. a week at the age of sixteen and doing the same work as the men who were getting 12s. a week. He reckoned that his employer got at least 5s. a week to pay for his apprenticeship. He had worked twenty-three years for one employer for 13s. a week, although he could do anything on a farm.

Mr. George Dallas approved the idea of apprenticeship in principle provided there was a decent standard of living to be attained by the skilled worker. "First give the labourer a decent wage, a good cottage and the chance of a brighter social life and then come along with a system of training. We ought to get the old love of craftsmanship back into the labourer's mind, encourage him to take an interest in his horses, cattle and fields, and let him see that it was good for him if he did his work well. Now he felt he was putting

money in the farmer's pocket and did not realise that if he worked well he was reducing the cost of production. The future of Agriculture depended on the efficiency of the workers."

In his paper on "The Decline of Village Life—Cause and Remedy," Mr. Haman Porter put the worker's point of view in regard to education in an interesting way as follows :—

One of the first things in the *reconstruction of village life*, in my opinion, is education. And I think the question may well be asked, why educate? how? and what kind of education must it be? Perhaps no other class in England left quite alone, with only Nature to bargain with, could better find for themselves than the agricultural labourer.

Let us realise that the conviction is deeply rooted that our labour has been used as a commodity, and that there may be a tendency to turn it into a monopoly. Sometimes we are amused, sometimes offended and hurt, by the way some people would teach us.

Living in close contact with Nature in all her moods, the thing which may appeal to the townsman has no attraction for us. Picture palaces and the like may be welcome, but not essential. We look upon all these like the covering we put on the sheep that is shorn early, it's handy, but wool is best—for the sheep. We quite realise the truth of the saying, "That Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the flower of the field."

I say these things that it may be easier to find what kind of an education is needed. I would like to suggest a few things which, perhaps, might help in the education and the building up of the village.

First, it must be understood that the agricultural labourer is religious, and this must be taken into account. He has a soul longing for freedom.

Open the doors of the treasure houses of the earth to us (I don't mean money!). Let us feel that we are taking part in the greatest industry in the country. Make it possible for us to study every science which will help in that industry. Where an inventive mind is found give it room, don't cramp it. Let not the question of birth stand in the way. Don't let us look on these things with a mean sordidness that will destroy, but let us seek, and if we do we shall certainly find new literature and art in the tilling of the soil.

I have thought sometimes that in these days of honours, it would be a good send-off for the reconstruction of village life

if His Majesty would confer an honour on some agricultural labourer.<sup>1</sup>

If schools cannot be brought nearer, the means of transit can be such in these days that children can be brought to the school. More can be done in the village school. Let the school be for the education of the child. Let the schoolmaster be a free man, not tied to sect or party. He to a great extent, if he is the right type of man—and these can be found!—could do much in saying what would be the best teaching for certain children. He would first study the child.

On the same occasion Mr. Haman Porter described the manner in which he served his apprenticeship in Agriculture. He said :—

Some of my earliest recollections were starting to school in some clothes which mother had made out of some of my brother's old clothes and how proud I felt when I got my first pair of boots : these used to be made *straight*, so that we could reverse them every day, right foot to-day, left to-morrow, so that we should keep them upright. If we got a good harvest, and were able to earn more money fagging the corn, and had a fine autumn, so that we could do plenty of "Leasing," that is "Gleaning," we got a new pair of boots each year ; if not, well we got them some time. But this stipulation was always made, that they should be made big enough so as to allow for growth of foot, that they might wear as long as possible. Imagine, if you can, the feeling of the plough-boy, having to walk on the rough clods all day when his toes wanted to push through his boots.

I started work at the age of 10 years and 2 weeks, getting 5*d.* per day, with breakfast at the farm on Sunday morning ; this breakfast I shall never forget, I didn't imagine that the world possessed such things as were on that breakfast table. My father was having 10*s.* per week, working on the next farm, my brother, 8 years older than myself, having 7*s.* My mother took all she could spare from this, and often the whole of her own part, and gave to my eldest sister's children, while their mother was too ill to look after them herself (in this case man, wife and 4 children ; wages, 12*s.* per week of 7 days). And let me say here, that while I do not believe that poverty is a crime, I know it is a curse. And of this thing I am certain, that so far as the agricultural workers of England are con-

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<sup>1</sup> Shortly afterwards Mr. George Edwards and Mr. George Nicholls received the honour of O.B.E.



cerned (and here I speak of all land workers), if the land is treated with fairness, and we will only realise that the agricultural labourer has a soul, then so far as the villages of England are concerned there will be no such thing as poverty.

Mr. Castell Wrey propounded a novel scheme of education in the paper which he entitled, "Suspicion." He asked whether some scheme of education or continuation classes could not be devised "where all the component parts of this important industry could attend, where practical work and scientific knowledge could be taught on a common ground, where friendships might be formed, and mutual understandings of the many agricultural problems be learnt by all classes of the industry." He set forth what he termed his rough ideas of such a scheme, thus :—

I should like some sort of big building, and the nearest example I can think of is a riding school, with an area of about an acre, where one corner could be shut off and seating accommodation provided for a lecture room. I should want a good cinematograph provided for illustrating different machines at work, for showing acts of cultivation, how to do a job and how not to do it. Slides could be presented showing good thatching and bad, good and bad crops, cattle, sheep, and all classes of livestock and breeds of poultry ; also slides showing different diseases and injurious insects and pests, fungus growth, cancer in trees, diseases well known by sight in different classes of stock, the many and various types of cereals, with their names and tendencies of growth, orchards and their cultivations ; and the thousand and one matters of interest in the business of farming, such as manuring, draining, sub-soiling, hedging and ditching. I would appoint as lecturers men of the very highest qualifications as regards agricultural science, but lecturers who understood that their audiences were not men of science or analysts, but merely men seeking knowledge. The lecturers must make their lectures interesting and simple.

I should want the lecturers to describe a disease as a dark spot on the lower leaf of the plant, or a swelling at a particular joint of an animal, not by a Latin name that sounds like a sneeze at the start of it and a bad hiccough at the end of it—one of those awful names that frighten one to try and spell, and leaves one with nervous prostration to try and pronounce.

In another part of my school I should like to see machinery in motion, driven by overhead shafting, so that the learners could get the swing of it when time is not of so much value as it is if

the men have to learn in the harvest field when every moment of fine weather is valuable. When the machine had been explained, while running, and then stopped, I should like to see a labourer's son and a landowner's son crawl under a binder and set to work to tighten up screws and working parts that had been wilfully loosened by the demonstrator to afford a lesson in repairs, to show how easy it is to remedy a defect if one has an intimate knowledge of the machine.

Then in the larger part of my school I would have dummy wooden stack tops, with a covering of moss litter or other substance that would hold a peg, and teach thatching— all three classes waiting on each other and learning to thatch in turn. On another spot dummy rows of mangel, represented by pegs, could be utilised to teach hoeing. And I would let all backs ache in common sympathy while a friendly race was run as to who could finish in best style and quickest. Dummy hedges could be plashed and layered; dummy stacks built and rebuilt with sheafs of reed or other article about the same weight as corn. If one really set out to improvise substitutes for actualities, all farmwork could be taught and handled with almost the exactitude of work in the field. Branches of trees could be brought in to serve for demonstrations in pruning and planting fruit trees; sheafs of corn brought to make examples of hand picking corn for seed; green crops could be stored in small quantities to show the fermentation necessary for ensilage; small pits of roots, some carefully and others badly pitted, could be made outside to show the wastefulness of careless pitting; stock could be brought to serve as patients for imaginary first aid in the most frequently occurring diseases or sicknesses.

I am convinced of one thing that if my imaginary school could be started and it was made attractive enough, simple enough and wide enough, the audience would be there—some for a joke, some from curiosity, and some from suspicion, to see how and what they could criticise—all of which tendencies would work into regular attendance by the inborn desire for knowledge that we all possess. Not only would the pupils gain a knowledge of Agriculture and its attractions, but the school would be the means, by friendly examinations and competitions, of uniting in common sympathy all classes engaged in it. It would help to a larger output of agricultural products and go a long way to dispel the mutual suspicion of each other in each class which, I believe, is such a bad factor in Agriculture to-day.

There is always a certain tinge of pathos in any constructive scheme, and if my ideal of education of the inter-dependent classes of farming were to materialise, and all united for the common benefit, one pathetic effect might be created—the disappearance of the Agricultural Wages Board.



H. PADWICK, C.B.E.,  
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL CLUB.

*Elliott & Fry.*



The "pathetic" picture which was held out by the ingenious author of this paper, like the proverbial vegetable before the asinine proboscis, materialised in the following year, but the "imaginary school" is still a vision of the future.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AGRARIAN POLITICS.

THE Agricultural Club, like the body from whence it sprang, represented a passing phase in the agricultural policy of the country. The policy of which it was indirectly the offspring was devised for the purposes of the war. But if it was born and baptised in war it was confirmed, with a fine display of parental enthusiasm and with all possible pledges for its future guardianship, in peace. Its infant career was, however, terminated by the abhorred shears, or, in the jargon of the moment, the "Economy Axe."

It must be remembered, therefore, that the discussion of agricultural policy at the Club took place during the brief period when it was assumed that an agricultural policy on novel but quite definite lines had been deliberately adopted and would be continued at least until it was repudiated by the country at a general election. This professedly settled policy was based on three main principles: (a) Guaranteed prices for corn; (b) minimum wages for labour; (c) control of cultivation. It represented the most important change in the relation of the State to Agriculture since the Repeal of the Corn Laws. The adoption of this policy was deliberate; its abandonment in 1921 was perhaps one of the most remarkable Parliamentary events in constitutional history. The policy was abandoned because the prices of corn had been miscalculated. To abandon a policy rather than amend an Act was a proceeding which may fairly be described as unusual.

In October, 1918, i.e., just before the Armistice, when the Corn Production Act of 1917 was in operation, being expressly limited to five years, and before any question had seriously arisen of making it the basis of permanent legisla-

tion, Mr. F. D. Acland read a paper on "Agricultural Organisation, with particular reference to guaranteed minimum prices." After dealing with the principles of agricultural co-operation and the progress of the movement represented by the Agricultural Organisation Society, he said :—

To come at length to the business in hand—what the farmer means by the support of the community is guaranteed minimum prices for his produce extending beyond the period of the Corn Production Act, and a revision of the Corn Production Act prices for grain in view of the increased cost of production. He is naturally very sensitive on these points, and very anxious. He wants the Government to commit itself, but the Government is thinking of many things. Also, and I say this with complete conviction, the question does not depend on what any Government says, but on what the great mass of intelligent men and women in the country think. The farmer has to put his case in a way which will convince them of its justice. That is what matters. The farmer starts on his path of carrying conviction to the urban voter with some things in his favour, some against. In his favour the country has realised that he has worked very hard at food production under very difficult circumstances, and that if he had not we should have been far hungrier than we have been—we might even have lost the war. They realise that without the power of being self-supporting in an emergency we may be in a very tight place if another emergency arises. Our food supply is our weak spot. Also it is realised that graduated minimum prices are not the same as protection.

All hope for protection for Agriculture by duties is utterly vain. German submarines gave us enough protection in favour of home-grown food to last us a lifetime. There is no chance whatever of our seeing any system which would in any way artificially increase the cost of the food we buy, except for purposes of revenue. But guaranteed minimum prices to home growers are quite compatible with giving every one their food at the world's lowest prices. Under that system the general taxpayer, in return for value received, makes up to the producer the difference between the price which he can obtain in the open market, and certain prices which are necessary in order that food production may be carried on in the way which the State demands. And if the great mass of town voters who will control Parliament succeeds in placing the great mass of the burden of post-war taxation on the shoulders of those better off than themselves, as seems very likely, they might view the finding of the money to guarantee certain prices to the producer

with equanimity. On the other side of the account we must admit that there is a strong prejudice in the minds of masses of townsmen against the farmer and the landlord. To them the farmer is an arrant profiteer, the landlord a bloodsucker. As to the landlord, I claim confidently that no other class has suffered anything like the same diminution of income owing to the war. The way they have, in the main, gone steadily on without trying to increase rents, even to cover extra tithe and taxation, let alone to cover the increased cost of all the work they have to pay for on their estates, without thought of actually increasing their incomes, still less with any notion of trying to have the same real income in purchasing power as before the war, without even imagining that the war could bring them profit (as it has to so many other classes), fills me with amazement. Do you know how much of the calculation of 2s. 3d. as the producers' price for milk represented rent? Not one townsman in a hundred would believe the answer, which is 0.44 of a penny, a tenth of a penny per quart, one per cent. on the retail price. As to the farmers profiteering, farmers in the main have not deliberately profiteered, though they have profited. But let us realise that when excessive claims have been put forward on behalf of farmers, as has unfortunately been done, untold harm is done to the interest of the whole agricultural community. They may get an extra pound a ton for their hay or potatoes now, but it is money dearly won. On balancing up pros and cons, however, I think it reasonable to conclude that the people of this country would listen to proposals to organise the agricultural industry on a better business basis, even if this organisation involved guaranteeing minimum prices, with patience and without prejudice, and this is something to start with.

My suggestion then is simply this: If guaranteed prices are to be asked for it should be only on a basis which will keep under cultivation an area necessary to make us self-supporting in an emergency, and will give to all engaged in Agriculture fair profits *if they organise their industry in the completest and best way possible*. I do not go into questions of areas to-night. On that I accept the teaching of Sir Daniel Hall, confirmed, as it was, by the paper which Mr. Lennard read us a fortnight ago. It is the idea of calculating the prices on the basis of a thoroughly organised Agriculture that I commend to your consideration.

If the urban consumer is to be expected to square up to the policy of permanently subsidising food production, the least he can ask is that all factors due to human backwardness or lack of enterprise shall be entirely eliminated in reckoning the bill which he may be called upon to pay. He will have to learn



to make a very ample allowance for the changes and chances to which Agriculture is exposed, which no human skill can guard against. The cutting of a field of corn may be turned by twenty-four hours' rain and wind from an operation costing 5s. to one costing 35s. an acre. Such weather as we have had in the north and north-west this year may, indeed, prevent there being any harvest at all. All this must be allowed for. But further than this no one need go ; and we may be pretty certain that under the terrific burden of taxation which we shall have after the war the community will not go. The present state of things will be a lesson, or should be. We have, for instance, recently had to fix milk prices. It was essential that there should be no reduction of the milk supply. What was it, therefore, necessary to do ? We had to find out what was the cost of milk production in that district in Great Britain where it cost most, and give the producers there a reasonable profit. The producers there may not practise milk recording, they may keep bad bulls, there may be no co-operation in dealing with their supplies. No matter. We were at their mercy, and so we shall have milk this winter at 10*d.* a quart. That sort of thing is not good enough, and we ought not to be asked to repeat it.

It is fair, then, to ask the consumer who wants a secure food supply to make its production reasonably remunerative on a strictly business basis of organisation of the producing industry. But the converse has to be considered. Is it fair to expect the farmer to organise his industry on this basis ? I think so, now as never before. Farmers now have, or should have, more capital than they have ever had before. They have been in the past, in many instances, more or less in the hands of auctioneers and traders. If they have not got free, or cannot now get free, they deserve very little consideration. They are, in fact, free to make what they like of their industry. The war has, in many ways, taught them to combine. They only need to use their power of combination for the public good as well as for their own to have before them extremely bright prospects. There is also now, clear for all to see, a strong compelling force, though it is in the nature of a goad, and it would be so much pleasanter to lead than to drive. It is this : that unless farmers organise themselves from within in co-operative societies, they will be much less pleasantly organised from without by State officials. The fear of controllers and inspectors and orders may do what neither self-interest nor public spirit can accomplish. But if farmers refuse to organise, what then ? The answer of the State will, I expect, be perfectly prompt. Let us take over, and let them give place to those who will. I do not personally think that land nationalisation is better than my ideal of a truly

co-operative community working out its own salvation for itself, but there are many millions of people in England who do, and unless they see very great changes taking place in the organisation of Agriculture very soon these numbers will steadily increase.

But you may say, "Why all this bother? There is not enough in agricultural co-operation to make much difference in calculating guaranteed prices." It may, in fact, be argued that the factors of climate, weather and soil count 90 per cent. or more in the price of agricultural produce, the difference between good organisation and bad only 10 per cent., or less. I do not know how this may be. That and many other things in the economics of Agriculture badly want working out. I only know that when agricultural co-operation was started in Ireland fertilisers came down 50 per cent. When the Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society took to providing dairying machinery, prices dropped 20 per cent. And we have, fresh in our minds, the figures that Mr. Guy gave us of the avoidable elements in costs of agricultural implements.<sup>1</sup> But it is the principle of the thing more than the amount that matters. If the whole organisation of the business is such as will give the consumer the best possible article at the lowest price he may fairly be asked to see that his food is produced on a basis which will first give the worker a living wage and a bit over for civilisation, then the farmer a reasonable margin of profit, and then the landowner a fair business return on the actual value of the work he does and of the equipment of the farm for which he has been responsible. The actual amount which the community saves by paying a price on a real business basis is a secondary matter.

There is one last point in regard to guaranteed prices that farmers should have in mind when they put forward their case. Guaranteeing a minimum price must carry with it the claim by the community to take produce at a maximum—not necessarily the same, but probably not very much higher. What world prices will be after the war we cannot tell. But if the State agrees to make farming remunerative, however low world prices may be, they will certainly expect the farmers to sell without any excessive remuneration if world prices are high. Remember that during the war the State has learnt to be a wholesaler on a gigantic scale, and in some ways not at all a bad one.

I can see that some of my friends among the farmers, if by this time I have any left, are looking pessimistic. I can imagine them saying, "It's a gloomy outlook. We are to cultivate as if nothing depended on organisation. We are to organise as if nothing depended on cultivation. So peradventure we

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI.

may possibly win the chance of making a bare living from England's future rulers." Cheer up, it will not be as bad as that. But even if it be, has not the war taught us that it does not much matter whether we make much money or little, provided that we have a steady hard job, worth working at, that we understand, and that we can work at it in association with men whom we know and trust, and who know and trust us? This, at any rate, is the least that agricultural co-operation has to offer, and I think that even on this basis the offer will not be made in vain.

I must append a story which some of us heard a few days ago. A visitor had gone round an asylum and was much struck by the small number of attendants. "What," he said to the superintendent, "would happen if your inmates were to combine?" "Oh," he replied, "that's all right, *lunatics* never combine."

In the paper by Mr. R. V. Lennard above referred to the application of economic principles to guaranteed prices and minimum wages was dealt with very cogently after laying down the maxim that "we must obtain our food supplies and all the other commodities we need with the least possible expenditure of energy," or, in other words, we must buy in the cheapest market. This well-worn dictum was qualified by the remark that British Agriculture has become, and will continue to be, the cheapest market for a considerably larger proportion of our food supplies than was grown in this country before 1914. Mr. Lennard proceeded:—

The various methods by which agricultural development may be made to conform to the requirements of sound economy, the various measures by which we may secure that as much food is produced in this country as can be produced at the *post-bellum* level of world-prices, and may prevent any more food than that from being produced here—for this is really what it comes to—are matters that need not be discussed in this place. There is, however, one particular instrument for the encouragement of Agriculture about which a word must be said. The continuance of the system of guaranteed prices, if these prices are not fixed any higher than the probable average level of world-prices, would not necessarily conflict with the dictates of the economic policy outlined above. Of course if the guaranteed prices were any higher than the probable level of world-prices they would be in direct opposition to the principles of that policy, for they

would then induce more food to be produced than could be produced at world-prices and would simply be magnets attracting labour and capital to channels less productive than those in which they might otherwise be employed. Such prices would involve a departure from sound principles of national business which could only be justified, if justified at all, on other than economic grounds. But guaranteed prices corresponding to probable world-prices are another matter. Whether they would be beneficial or harmful is a question on which opinions will differ. On the one hand, it may be argued that the Government knows more about the probable future of world-prices than any individual farmer, and that therefore it may well give him the benefit of its superior knowledge in the form of an insurance. On the other hand, it is possible to argue that guaranteed prices will probably be determined not by the wisdom of the Board of Agriculture but by the folly of Members of Parliament, and that though farmers have less knowledge than the Board of Agriculture, they have more knowledge than the politicians. Again, it may be urged that guaranteed prices would give the farmer a special privilege as compared with men in other forms of business, that the policy of coddling Agriculture and allowing it such privileges as low rents, low wages, and an exceptional position in regard to income tax has been tried in the past, and that Agriculture thus coddled has languished, while manufacture, which has been exposed to the fiercest struggle for the survival of the fittest, has thriven and grown strong. Why, it may be asked, should the agriculturist be insured by the Government free of charge, when the cotton-spinner, if he is insured at all, insures himself by the ordinary method of paying a premium to an insurance company? The question may be left to be settled on its merits. But the question of guaranteed prices leads to another point which may conveniently be dealt with at this stage, before the economic aspects of agricultural policy are left for the consideration of the social and naval or military side of the problem. It is sometimes said that if you have minimum wages for farm labourers you ought to have guaranteed prices for the farmers. It is true that this was not the policy of the Government when the Corn Production Act was passed, and that the suggested connection between minimum wages and guaranteed prices was expressly disavowed by the Minister in charge of the Bill. It is true too that in other industries where there is a minimum wage the employers have no guaranteed prices to help them. None the less the argument mentioned above is often advanced; and it cannot be too strongly urged that the minimum wage and the guaranteed price, so far from being complementary, are from the point of view of national economy liable to be in flat contra-

diction, as it were, the one to the other. A minimum wage, if it is fixed at a sum equal to that which a workman of average capacity might earn in some other trade, is a powerful instrument of economy. It prevents men being employed on tasks worth less than those on which they might be employed in other industries. Thus it ensures the economic use of the nation's manpower. But guaranteed prices, if they are any higher than the prices which the goods subject to them would fetch in the open market without the guarantee, turn this instrument of economy into an excuse for extravagance. The minimum wage without the guarantee means that the employer will only use labour for tasks which are really worth while from the point of view of national economy. But guaranteed prices may give tasks an artificial value so that the employer finds it pays him to employ men upon tasks which, though they yield a good money return because of their guaranteed value, only produce a small result in actual goods for a considerable expenditure of human energy. Linked together, a minimum wage and a guaranteed price may unite master and man in a misdirection of labour which is a gross waste of national wealth.

Mr. Lennard proceeded to discuss the considerations other than economic which may be taken into account in developing an agricultural policy. Welfare is more than wealth, and while material prosperity is vital to civilisation other things are also vital, such as national security and a healthy constitution of society. The development of Agriculture up to the economic maximum adds to the nation's wealth, and if this limit is exceeded labour and capital are employed in directions less remunerative than those in which they might otherwise be employed. This may be justifiable, but it must be justified on other than economic grounds.

This point, which has been already touched on in preceding chapters,<sup>1</sup> needs repeated emphasis. As I have elsewhere observed—

“In any forecast of the future of British Agriculture it is desirable to be clear what is expected of it. Shortly stated, the agricultural land of a country may be developed for one of three main objects—profit, production or population.”<sup>2</sup>

An agricultural policy which has for its main object the

<sup>1</sup> Chapters, V and VI.

<sup>2</sup> *Food Supplies in Peace and War* (Longmans), p. 152.

profit of the individuals engaged in the cultivation of the land is the only one, as Mr. Lennard pointed out, which rests on an economic basis.

If maximum production, regardless of maximum profit, is aimed at, it is with the object of reducing the amount of imported food supplies in the interest either of national security or of national finance.

The third object which an agricultural policy may be primarily intended to secure is the employment of the largest possible number of persons on the land in the interests of racial vigour and political stability.

Mr. Lennard dealt with what may be termed the "maximum rural population" object, or, as he called it, the "social argument" in an interesting manner. Pointing out that a large agricultural population was advocated as a desirable national asset because country life breeds men of strong physique, and the sober slow-going ways of rustic society provide a check upon "the heady impulses and tempestuous fevers of urban democracy," he observed that the experience of the war had thrown some doubt on this argument.

The records of the London and Manchester regiments alone are sufficient to prove that town-life does not necessarily involve physical or moral decadence, for the clerks and artisans of those two cities have shown themselves worthy of the best traditions of the race both by their endurance in the trenches and their valour upon the field of battle. The spectacle of Russian anarchy, again, hardly encourages the belief that rural life makes for sober political judgment, since Russia is a country which employs some four-fifths of her population in husbandry. Besides, there are other aspects of the social question which deserve far more attention than they have hitherto received. It is an essential condition of healthy social life that the two sexes should be fairly evenly distributed throughout the country. By those who believe in the beneficent influence of sexual selection the importance of this point will at once be acknowledged. If there is a preponderance of males in certain districts, or even if the preponderance of females is less in some districts than in others, the tendency will be, not for the selected women of the whole population to become the mothers of the next generation, but for all or nearly all the women to be married in those regions which are over-populated with males and for a

large surplus of women to remain unmarried in other parts of the country.

Now the war has robbed the nation of many of its strongest and healthiest males, and it is therefore more important than ever for the physical well-being of the race that the mothers of the next generation should be the healthiest and strongest women. Even apart from this fact, and apart from all theories of sexual selection, it is surely obvious that happy social life requires a fairly even distribution of the sexes throughout the country. The bearing of all this upon the agricultural problem cannot be mistaken. Agriculture is necessarily carried on away from the towns, and before the war, was so peculiarly a male occupation in this country that a common feature of English society at the time of the last Census was the existence of an actual surplus of males in the rural districts and a great preponderance of females in the towns. Agriculture, the great industry of rural England, provided employment, with negligible exceptions, for men and boys only ; and the girls got their living in the towns as factory hands or as domestic servants. Moreover there must have been a tendency for the strongest girls from the villages to seek urban employment, while the delicate girls remained at home to become the wives of the farm labourers. The conclusion is obvious. The development of Agriculture, if it continues to be almost entirely a man's trade, will carry this unhealthy distribution of the sexes still further and to that extent will be socially disadvantageous. It will of course be replied that in the future women may be employed more extensively in the fields or that industries which employ women may be established in the villages. But even so you have not got rid of the difficulty. Will not the arduous work of the fields be inimical to motherhood or at least to that care of home and children which is so necessary to the happiness of the working man and so important for the future of the race ? And as regards the establishment of new women's industries in country districts, either those industries will be economically desirable and self-supporting or they will not. If they are a business proposition and can be made self-supporting, such industries should be established in any case. But then we should have an increase of rural population without agricultural development, and the possibility of increasing the rural population in this way diminishes the force of the social argument that we must develop Agriculture, even beyond the economic maximum, in order to increase the number of persons who dwell in the country. On the other hand, if the new women's industries cannot be self-supporting, they must involve additional expense—a further misdirection of labour and capital—and in that case the need of establishing such industries to counteract the

excess of males introduced by excessive agricultural development clearly increases the force of the economic argument against such development.

Having thus dealt with the "social argument," Mr. Lennard dealt with what may be termed the "maximum production" argument, and observed that the problem of national defence in relation to agricultural development is not so simple as is often assumed. The popular view is that the submarine having revolutionised the naval position and added enormously to the risk of our dependence on overseas food supplies (which in any future war may be expected to be jeopardised in a still greater degree by the development of the new maritime engine of warfare), it follows that, however uneconomic it may be, the defence of the nation demands that its reliance on imported supplies should be reduced to the lowest possible limits. In Mr. Lennard's words, "many people assume, as if it were a self-evident truth, that the proper way of meeting the submarine peril is to make the country, if possible, self-sufficing, at least so far as wheat is concerned." He maintained, however, that these contentions are more than doubtful:—

In the first place, it must once more be emphasised that the development of Agriculture is inimical to the growth of merchant shipping. The shipping of this country is not maintained by sentiment: it has grown in the past, and will grow in the future, out of the needs of our overseas trade. The volume of merchant shipping will in the long run correspond to the volume of overseas trade, and if the country becomes less dependent upon supplies from abroad it will need and it will possess less mercantile tonnage.

Secondly, it is all-important to notice that the submarine danger is not confined to the matter of imported food. In the last four years we have learnt that war creates a tremendous need for the overseas transport of troops and horses and all kinds of military stores. For this transport it is essential to have a large reserve of merchant shipping. Moreover, for the defence of these transport activities against submarine attack, you need a Navy which is adaptable, and capable of emergency expansion—and that means a Navy which can draw for war purposes upon the skilled seamanship of a large mercantile marine and can commandeer all sorts of commercial vessels and



use them for purely naval purposes. It means too that behind the Navy you must have, not only a large reserve of merchant seamen and merchant shipping, but gigantic facilities for the building of ships. And it is clear that the shipbuilding resources of the country will be reduced rather than increased if foreign trade is allowed to languish.

After expanding the argument that the welfare and prosperity of the nation depend upon its mercantile marine, he reached the following general conclusions :—

First, it is clear that a wise agricultural policy can be devised only after an examination of the whole field of national economy. The question is not an agricultural question only. It is not even a purely economic question. For the dictates of economic policy must be examined and criticised in the light of the requirements of social policy and Imperial Defence. Only if this is done can we hope that our agricultural policy will promote the welfare of the nation as a whole.

Secondly, economic considerations suggest that British Agriculture ought to be developed beyond the point which it had reached in 1914, and, in view of the probable continuance of a higher level of world-prices, that it should be developed beyond the point to which in 1914 it would have paid us to carry it. On the other hand, sound economy teaches that it would be wasteful to make the Agriculture of these islands more intensive than world-prices and world-competition allow. Neither social advantages nor security in war would really be obtained by pushing development beyond the maximum required by economic considerations. The great need of Imperial Defence is not the maximum production of food in time of peace, but the maintenance of British Agriculture in such a condition that it will be capable of great and rapid expansion in an emergency.

It is necessary to bear in mind the chronology of the various contributions to the discussion of agricultural policy. Those of Mr. Acland and Mr. Lennard were made in October, 1918, when the Corn Production Act had been a little over a year on the statute book. The guaranteed prices contained in that measure had been proved by events to have no relation to the prices actually being realised by corn-growers. The gap between the guaranteed prices and the realised average prices may be shown by a simple statement, thus :—

	Guaranteed prices.		Average market prices.	
	Wheat per qr. s. d.	Oats per qr. s. d.	Wheat per qr. s. d.	Oats per qr. s. d.
1917 . .	60 0	38 6	75 9	49 10
1918 . .	55 0	32 0	72 10	49 4
1919 . .	55 0	32 0	72 11	52 5
1920 . .	45 0	24 0	80 10	56 10

By the Agriculture Act passed December 23, 1920, the guaranteed prices were put on a sliding scale basis varying as the estimated cost of producing wheat or oats in any year varied from the cost of production in the "standard" year, which was taken to be 1919, a method which appeared plausible on paper but in practice would probably have been extremely difficult to apply satisfactorily. However, it was—perhaps fortunately—never tested.

In the latter part of 1918 the question of after-war agricultural policy had been much under discussion, but no definite action had been taken.

In April, 1921, a paper dealing with agricultural policy was read by Mr. W. R. Smith, M.P., the President of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, and leader of the Workers' representatives on the Wages Board. At that time the Agriculture Act was universally regarded as the embodiment of a national agricultural policy, settled after mature deliberation and representing the considered views of the Government. The remarks of Mr. Smith must be regarded in the light of the circumstances existing when he spoke:—

We are bound to consider how the land can best be used in the interests of the whole community, and it is, therefore, from that standpoint that we must consider its relation to Agriculture. I firmly believe that the method generally adopted of approaching this question is wrong. There is always a tendency to look to the politicians to find a way out. The question has been discussed as to whether protection or free-trade would most benefit the industry of Agriculture, and lately we have been proceeding along the lines of giving a guarantee to enable the

industry to sustain a measure of prosperity. This method is wrong. It is not good for Agriculture that it should rest upon a political basis. That is too insecure, and I think it will be shown, as time goes on, that as soon as Agriculture becomes a burden to the nation from the taxpayer's point of view, then a change will take place. As a matter of fact, the statement of policy to-day in regard to industry in general is that there must be no subsidy. That is emphatic so far as manufactures are concerned, and if it is put forward as the nation's adopted policy in regard to industry, then sooner or later it must be applied to Agriculture. If, after a number of years, Agriculture is made prosperous by the application of guarantees which may mean the payment of large sums of money, then it is certain the country will readily respond to agitation which may destroy the basis entirely; and after a certain measure of security had been obtained by virtue of those guarantees, a sudden change would mean disaster. I know that in the Agriculture Act there is a clause securing four years' warning but this will not necessarily be maintained, and the whole position is so unsatisfactory that it is not wise to look to it as the one means of developing Agriculture in this country. Nothing is more liable to change than the political situation. We have had our views falsified by recent events, for now, by a sudden turn of the wheel, we find ourselves in one particular industry plunged back to the pre-war position, and if that can happen in the case of the big issues now before the country, then it can happen to Agriculture.

In a very short time the warning thus given was fulfilled and the insecurity of the "political basis" on which Agriculture had been placed was amply demonstrated.

After referring to the probability that the development of the use of machinery in Agriculture would be an important factor in the future, and expressing his belief that the central position must be met by national ownership of the land under such an arrangement as made it possible for the land to be used in the interests of the people, Mr. Smith continued:—

I cannot help feeling that Agriculture as an industry has in the past been run on entirely wrong lines. There has certainly been co-operation in the past but it has been entirely between landlord and farmer, whereas it should have been between farmer and labourer. To make any industry prosperous there should be co-operation between what we may term the operative

sections of the industry, namely, the farmer and the labourer. In the past, there has been little regard paid to the position of the labourer, and even in modern times nobody seems to have any idea when speaking of scientific education that it has any reference to the labourer. I cannot see how even the best schemes can succeed unless the component parts play the parts properly allotted to them, and labour must have a position which has never yet been allotted to it. Unless the labourer is efficient and thereby enabled to enter into his task properly in order to get the best results, then it will not be possible for Agriculture to flourish. The labourer's present position is entirely due to his own efforts, and he will not depart from what he has gained without a great amount of resistance, and I think we are bound to consider the position of Agriculture more from the point of view of the labourer than has hitherto been the case.

In the course of his paper Mr. Smith expressed doubts whether either the adoption of co-operation, as advocated by Mr. Leslie Scott and others, or the general establishment of small holdings, provided a solution of the Land problem. Small holdings, he observed, "are only possible in certain parts of the country," and could not form the main basis of the agricultural industry. Nor did he favour individual ownership. Differing on this point from Mr. Lennard, who cited Russia as evidence that peasant proprietorship did not prevent revolution, Mr. Smith considered that ownership developed "a type of person who is conservative in the extreme," one who, owing to his restricted position, "looks upon change or development in any direction in a hostile frame of mind."

I remember remarking on one occasion that as all roads lead to Rome so all the discussions at the Club, on whatever subject, led sooner or later to small holdings. This of course was an exaggeration, but it was of interest to note how frequently this subject cropped up, and how, whenever it was introduced, it never failed to "draw" certain of the members. On this occasion Mr. Smith's views were challenged by several speakers. Mr. Haman Porter dwelt on the satisfaction which the small holder had in a piece of ground he could call his own, and expatiated, as he frequently did, on the in-bred love of the land which animated

those who were born and bred on it. Sentiment, he observed, played a large part in life, and he mentioned that when certain relatives of his emigrated to Canada they took with them a pot of English soil. Mr. George Edwards averred his belief in small holdings if they were associated with a proper system of co-operation. Mr. Hewitt, as a small holder himself, remarked that the small holding was one of the factors which would help to work out the country's salvation. He stated that of nine men who took small holdings at the same time as himself none would wish to go back to their previous position. He believed, however, that the nationalisation of the land would be beneficial. The "touch of Nature," which makes the farmer and the small holder kin, was apparent in his observation that the application of science to farming might be carried too far. For example, he said, scientists were trying to get something to take the place of farm-yard manure, but this would never be satisfactory. Thus we had another exposition of the old familiar axiom that "There's nothing like muck."

Mr. Smith made some arresting remarks about the retention of the labourers on the land. "He must not be tied on, but the social amenities must be such as to give him a desire to remain there. It has often been said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. If there is any meaning at all in that statement then it must follow that facilities for recreation would make better men and women in the villages." He also lamented the deterioration in craftsmanship, and observed that the Norfolk County Council had sent Mr. Hewitt round to teach thatching, as the number of labourers who knew the art was so small. An educational system was required which would fit the labourer for his work.

In summarising his conclusions, Mr. Smith said:—

I suggest then, in the first place, that to develop Agriculture fully and successfully, the land should be nationally owned and controlled so that it may be ready and available for any developments in the industry. Secondly, there must be an attempt to associate more closely the activities of the farmer and the labourer. I hope that is not impossible. There are

more students of Agriculture in our colleges to-day than ever, and many of these will be the farmers of the future. They must remember that their knowledge will be much more advantageous if the labourer is doing the best of which he is capable.

In conclusion, . . . I have indicated a view of the agricultural industry as the organised Labour movement desire it to be. We all desire to see the largest agricultural population possible, and we desire the greatest production of food possible. If once we get Agriculture established on a sound basis, this desire will be achieved. There will also be great avenues for employment in rural life, and the prosperity of the country-side will be assured.

The subject of Land Nationalisation, which was the pivot of Mr. Smith's paper, although it was not aggressively obtruded, lies, of course, at the root of Agrarian politics and comes properly under that heading. It may be convenient to deal with it in a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER IX.

### NATIONALISATION OF THE LAND.

“LAND Nationalism” is a current phrase which is frequently used, like “the blessed word Mesopotamia,” by those who have but a vague idea of its significance. At the Club it was one of the subjects, like education, small holdings, and the tied cottage, which might be confidently expected to be referred to by some speaker in the discussion, no matter what the original topic for debate might be. There is a certain glamour about the idea so long as it remains in the rarefied atmosphere of generalities. “God gave the Land to the People” is not only a pleasing sentiment, but embodies a truth which as a theoretical proposition is undeniable. Those who accept the literal reading of the Biblical story of the Creation might perhaps argue that the Creator made Adam the first landlord, but even they might hesitate to adopt the conclusion that the whole world was given him as his private property. At any rate if the world were conveyed to Adam by Divine decree it must be assumed that his right of ownership passed to his descendants, and that he held only a life interest in the property.

For practical purposes, however, it has to be recognised that we are a long way removed from the Garden of Eden, and that, as a matter of hard fact, the greater part of the earth's surface, which is suitable for human habitation, has been acquired, mainly by conquest in one form and another, by individuals or groups of individuals, who claim, and exercise, rights of ownership to the exclusion of other individuals or groups. It may be an interesting subject for academic debate that every human being has an equal right to possess every bit of the earth's surface, but it would be about as profitable as a discussion of the equally interest-

ing problem on which mediæval schoolmen are said to have broken their argumentative teeth—the number of angels that can stand on the point of a needle. Even those who maintain the natural right of every man to ownership of land would probably shrink from the logical application of the principle. They would hesitate to admit, for example, that every Chinaman was entitled to a bit of English land, even with the corollary that every Englishman was entitled to a bit of China. When the right of Englishmen to the land is spoken of it is understood that their right is limited to England.

Of course in this crude form the equal right of every man to own land is not seriously put forward. It may be used for rhetorical purposes to embellish a peroration, but it “cuts no ice,” as the Americans say, for practical purposes.

The Nationalisation of the Land means that the right of private ownership of land should be abolished and that the State should be the sole landlord. The mode by which the transference from private to public ownership should be effected has been considered very seriously by earnest reformers, and there has been some division of opinion among them on the point. Some have urged that as in legal theory there is no absolute ownership of land, which is all held ultimately from the Crown, it is quite simple for the State to resume its property and merely give the present nominal owners notice to quit. They argue that as the titles of the present landlords were in most cases obtained by their ancestors or predecessors by force or favour, and in some cases by even more discreditable methods, they have no moral right to their property, and although the original title may go back to the long past the present possessors must suffer for the sins of those who preceded them.

This stern unbending type of land reformer has, however, nowadays lost influence, and the modern type recognises that the eviction of all present owners of land without compensation is a proceeding which might cause some hardship to innocent persons—so far as a landowner can be an innocent person—and in any case might not commend



itself to the general sense of the community as equitable. In an interesting little book on Land Nationalisation, the joint production of the Chairman of the Railway Nationalisation Society and a former Organiser of the Land Nationalisation Society, I find a frank statement of the issue. They refer to the "advanced section—numerically unimportant," who are absolutely opposed to giving any compensation at all on the ground that "the original proprietors of the land simply stole it." It would be interesting, by the way, to know who, in the view of the "advanced section," the original proprietors of the land of England were. It is a problem which, I believe, has not yet been conclusively settled by ethnographical authorities. The question is, however, immaterial, because there is no doubt that whoever the original proprietors were they "stole" the land, even if their predecessors upon it were only the bison and the wolf. But the authors of the work I have mentioned, while sympathising with the "advanced section," and recognising that "they can establish quite a good case—so good a case that if all the land of the country were in the ownership of a few great families, we should agree that the simplest form of dealing with the matter would be for the community to proclaim the land of the country national property as from a given date," have to admit that, "unfortunately," it is not so simple a matter as that. Though there are still "some very large landowners," the land, speaking generally, has become so parcelled out and most of it has changed hands so frequently within the last few generations that "to take it over without compensation to the present owners would bring about a complete breakdown of the whole social fabric." They proceed to amplify this statement very forcibly. "Quite apart from the hundreds of thousands of small owners who might easily be ruined by such a course, we have the fact that hundreds of millions of pounds of the funds of Insurance Companies and other institutions, as well as of private persons, are invested in mortgages on landed properties, and if the land, the security for such advances, were to be taken without compensation, these institutions would immediately become

insolvent, and the millions of people who have invested the savings of years in life and endowment policies, the purchase of annuities, etc., as a provision against old age or for their families in case of death, would lose the certainty of getting what they had been paying for." After some further elaboration and illustration of the point, the authors conclude that "the proposal of giving no compensation is too ridiculous to be discussed seriously," a statement which, however self-evident it may be, seems a little disrespectful to the "advanced section."

Having reached this conclusion, it remains only for those who advocate the acquisition of the land by the State to fix the amount to be paid for it, and it is interesting to note that on a basis of payment which does not claim to be overwhelmingly generous, the total amount which the State—or in other words, the taxpayers—would have to find would be £4,000,000,000, a sum which, in the present state of the national finances, there might be some little difficulty in raising.

The question of Land Nationalisation was one which I was desirous the Club should discuss. I commented more than once on the reluctance of members to come to grips with it. It is idle to ignore the fact that the idea has captivated the sympathy and support of very large numbers of the people, especially in the rural districts. On the other hand, there are many who regard it as equivalent to "red ruin and the breaking up of laws," a kind of madness which approximates to sacrilege. What is most needed is that both advocates and opponents should descend from the clouds of rhetoric to the sober level of serious consideration. There is nothing inherently preposterous in the idea that the State should own all the land. In new countries, at the outset at any rate, it usually does, and in many countries still the State is by far the largest owner of land. Even in this country the State, in the name of the Crown, owns large tracts and exercises all the functions of landlord, while still larger areas are not in private hands, but are owned and administered by public authorities, colleges, hospitals and other corporations. In view of all that is claimed for

public, as opposed to private, ownership of land, the curious thing is, as in the case of the Cardinal's curse—

“ Nobody seemed one penny the worse ”—

or better.

If public ownership is so much superior to private ownership and increases so greatly the happiness of those who occupy and cultivate the land, why are not more signs of its advantages apparent on the Crown lands? On one occasion, when Mr. Higdon had reiterated his conviction that Land Nationalisation (and not co-operation, which happened to be the subject of debate) was the remedy for all rural ills, Lord Bledisloe remarked that he would be glad to welcome Mr. Higdon to his house, which was on the border of a national property. He would then learn what a lack of civic life, an absence of conscience in the matters of land and house improvement, a deficiency of commercial enterprise and a prevalence of low wages characterised that locality.

It was not until the Club had been going for nearly a year that the subject of Land Nationalisation was formally introduced for discussion. Mr. Christopher Turnor, in February, 1919, read a paper which he opened by saying that I had asked him to do so, and that he felt with me that the time had come to ventilate the question and invite discussion. It so happened that the meeting was that to which I have previously referred as being the only occasion on which I was absent from the Club. After remarking that the subject was so large that people had fought shy of tackling it, Mr. Turnor declared that he did not approach it in a hostile spirit, and was not opposed to nationalisation in principle, but as applied to land, he wanted to consider it on its merits and to see if it would indeed benefit the nation and the great industry in which all took so deep an interest. He proceeded :—

In general terms the arguments put forward in favour of the nationalisation of land are :—

- (1) That the community would secure to itself the increment value of the land instead of the individual benefiting by an increased value caused by the community itself.

- (2) That if tenant farmers held their land under the State, fixity of tenure would be secured.
- (3) That somehow or other the labourer would benefit by the introduction of this system—exactly why they should I have never been able to understand.
- (4) That nationalising the land would make possible the introduction of the single tax system. But as it is under present conditions—conditions which will, presumably, obtain for some time—the rental obtained from land would only furnish a comparatively small proportion of the necessary revenue, I submit that this point need not be further considered.
- (5) That the proper control of cultivation would be secured and the consequent increase in production from the soil.
- (6) That the community would benefit socially if the land of the United Kingdom were nationalised, for it would then be readily available for all development.
- (7) That, since from the technical and legal point of view landowners hold their land from the Crown, the State would be perfectly justified in resuming absolute possession of the land, and that such resumption would not be an act of confiscation. Extremest point of view, common land.
- (8) That it is essential to nationalise land first before nationalising railways, mines, etc.
- (9) That it would secure easy access to land for the largest possible number of people.

Let me now define what I deem nationalisation as applied to land to mean: I take it that briefly it means that in the end there would be one owner of land—the State—instead of, as at present, a multiplicity of owners; and that farmers would hold their land from and pay rental to the State, instead of being, as at present, tenants of individual landowners. So that we should still have the system of tenant and owner; this is a point which I want you to keep clearly in your minds.

Mr. Turnor then emphasised the fact that in discussing the nationalisation of the land it was essential to distinguish clearly between urban and rural land. He pointed out that there are many considerations affecting the one which did not apply to the other, and that in general terms a stronger case might be made out for the nationalisation of urban land than for that of rural land. As regards agricultural land, Mr. Turnor proceeded:—

There are about 50,000,000 acres of cultivated land (grass and arable) in the United Kingdom. The gross income therefrom in the form of rental amounts to some £50,000,000 per annum, or an average of £1 per acre. This is by far the lowest average rental in civilised Europe.

Of the above £50,000,000 at least £25,000,000, apart from taxation, goes back to the land to pay for general upkeep and expenses of management. So that the net income which the agricultural landowners receive is (after payment of tithe, land tax and income tax) considerably less than £25,000,000 a year. Whereas, in general terms, urban landowners do not themselves develop and improve their land, the agricultural landowner does do so. That our land to-day can be used for growing food for the nation is owing to the fact that the owners have spent vast sums in building houses, farm buildings, farm roads, fencing and draining.

In the case of many estates the capital spent on these improvements equals or exceeds the total selling value of the estate to-day.

In common justice the owner would be entitled to full compensation for the capital he has spent upon the industrial equipment of the land. The income enjoyed by ninety-nine out of a hundred agricultural landowners represents only a low rate of interest on this capital and no real rental for the land itself.

From the financial point of view, therefore, the State does not stand to gain much by the nationalisation of agricultural land.

It is now very generally admitted that under our present system of land tenure the production from our land is much less than it should be; but this is no reason for embarking upon a great measure, which, if tried on a large scale, would really be an experiment. Nowhere has land been nationalised on a sufficiently large scale to give data upon which to build. If we are dissatisfied with our present system would it not be wiser to study the system of tenure in other countries, and adopt that system which is found to be associated with a highly developed and successful agricultural industry, rather than to embark upon experiment?

And it is easily demonstrated that wherever Agriculture has reached its highest stage of development the system of tenure is based upon occupying ownership.

There are upwards of half a million farmers, large and small, in England and Wales. The question of supreme national importance is to see that they produce the utmost amount of food economically possible for the nation.

It is clearly necessary to consider the psychology of this important group, and there can be no doubt that the majority

of farmers are opposed to the nationalisation of rural land ; it could only be done in the face of their opposition. According to Mr. Outhwaite, the State should charge far higher rentals than are now charged by the present owners. This would hardly tend to lessen their opposition. If nationalisation were forced upon farmers there is no doubt that the result would be to upset them to such an extent that the production of food from the land would be seriously lessened, and this for a long period.

But we are out to increase the production of food from the land. How, then, justify a measure which would undoubtedly cause serious upheaval in our greatest industry and at the same time produce little or no financial gain for the nation.

From the social point of view it is desirable that the land should give employment to the largest possible number of people, working and living under proper conditions, that there should be easier access to land than in the past, and undoubtedly that the very large estates should be reduced in size.

But if nationalising the land would arouse the active hostility of a most important section of the agricultural community, and further, check the development of the industry and consequently lessen employment on the land, it is hard to see how it can be sound from the social point of view.

Finally, we have taken many centuries to work away from the old feudal conditions when the cultivators of the soil were villeins to their over-lord. The antithesis to this system is that of occupying ownership.

If the State were to become the single over-lord and owner of all the land in the kingdom, the position of the cultivator of the soil might well return to that obtaining in feudal times. Only in a way it would be worse, for he would be over-ridden with officials and officialdom.

There is no getting away from the fact that to nationalise the land is to perpetuate the system of tenancy. But it has been shown that on the one hand under the tenancy system our land has reached only some 50 per cent. of its potential development ; on the other hand, that in every other country in the world (new and old) the system of tenancy has been deliberately rejected in favour of that of occupying ownership with resulting more complete development and greater inducement for personal enterprise.

And it must be remembered that in nearly every other country much more thought and care has been given to land questions than with us. We should, therefore, hesitate before we pronounce against the results of universal experience.

As far as the objects of the land nationalists go, I think I am safe in assuming that most of us are in sympathy with

many of them, but the practical question is how best to secure them. For myself, I am convinced that there are other and better ways of securing to the State the full financial (and social) benefits which it should receive from the complete development of the land; and recent and prospective legislation is surely in the direction of securing to the State these benefits?

1. We have now the taxation of land values; if this were fully developed the community rather than the individual would receive the increment.

The Bill for the compulsory acquisition of land, which will be introduced this Session, should enable public authorities to acquire land easily and at a reasonable price, and thus secure the needed access to the land.

2. Occupying ownership carries with it the completest form of security of tenure, provided that there is a sound system of credit which enables the farmer to borrow money under a system of redeemable loan rather than that of the perpetual mortgage (without a sinking fund) which has had such baneful effects in this country.

3. The Agricultural Wages Board and Committees should secure the position of the labourer.

4. The railways and mines can be nationalised, if desired, without nationalising the whole land of this country.

5. The proper cultivation of the soil and the prevention of its being put to improper uses can be secured by making permanent the provisions of the Corn Production Act.

Again, we must remember that other sections of the community, besides the agricultural, would be affected by nationalising the land, especially if anything approaching to confiscation were resorted to. I quote the words of a well-known land nationaliser:—

“Now the loss resulting from the confiscation of a considerable proportion of private property in land, and from the consequent sudden depreciation of land values, would not be restricted to a single class of landowners. It would be felt by many others besides the immediate owners of the soil. Through the agencies of mortgages, building societies, insurance companies, etc., large numbers of people of all classes possess a considerable indirect interest in landed property, and would be hard hit by any confiscatory measure.

“Moreover, the ramifications and interweavings of credit are so complex and so far-spreading that any sudden depreciation of an important class of property must have disastrous consequences, which would be felt by the whole community.”

Finally, I feel that there is a great danger in land nationalisation being taken up as a catch-word, and being regarded as a sort of panacea.

It may in the future become desirable, from a political point of view, but not from the agricultural, for nationalisation of the land in itself will not increase its yield. What we require to-day is the application to our agricultural industry of those forces and principles which have within recent years caused so striking a development in the Agriculture of other European nations.

Let us first achieve that high development of our primary industry, and then, if the nation should determine to try a political experiment with the land, it may stand it better than at the present time, when Agriculture is just recovering from long years of depression and oppression.

In the ensuing discussion Mr. Lobjoit, speaking as a cultivator of the land and also as a member of the Land Nationalisation Society, observed that under present conditions the best form of tenure was ownership and the next best tenancy under the old-fashioned landlord, who looked after his tenants. Under Nationalisation there would be increased control and also, no doubt, increased rents, but on the other hand, farmers would have security of tenure. Tenants of Corporations and public bodies now felt themselves as secure as if they owned their holdings. There would also be no danger of a tenant being rented on his own improvements and no difficulty in ensuring that the land was put to the best use in the interests of the community.

Mr. W. R. Smith, M.P., said the old system of landlordism was disappearing, and the choice now was between tenancy on an estate bought by speculators and the nationalisation of the land.

Sir Arthur Boscawen, M.P., who took part in the discussion as a visitor, remarked that Land Nationalisation was a political not an agricultural question. Under the present system the landlord provided the equipment and if Agriculture developed more capital was attracted to the land. Under Nationalisation every time money was wanted for drainage, etc., the tenant would have to go cap in hand to the Treasury. There might be some bad landowners now but they could be dealt with, while the State would always be a bad landowner.



Mr. R. Richards expressed the view that no valid argument had been adduced against the nationalisation of the land. It was essential for the community to have control over agricultural land which would, as industries developed, become urban land.

Mr. John Evens believed that private enterprise had increased agricultural production and helped to win the war. Forty years ago Agriculture was enabled to carry on because the landlords came to the help of their tenants when disaster overtook them.

Sir A. Hazlerigg remarked that all agreed that the nationalisation of the land involved a vast horde of Government officials, and what could be worse?

Mr. Lane Fox, M.P., another visitor, said it was well to have ideals, but it was necessary to consider the cost of attaining them. No one had suggested a basis for estimating the cost of nationalising the land.

Mr. Haman Porter voiced the feeling of labourers that they had at present no part or lot in the land.

In replying on the discussion, Mr. Turnor said he agreed with many of the objects which the advocates of land nationalisation had in view, but he thought they could be obtained by less costly methods. Nationalisation was a political experiment. He suggested the system of occupying ownership, which had achieved such good results in other countries, as a practicable alternative. It was stated in all official reports that small holders were not in favour of buying their holdings, but the possibilities of purchase had never been properly explained to them. When this had been done they altered their views. Let us get the land into the best condition first and then the nation might consider the advisability of nationalising it.

## CHAPTER X.

### OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY.

THAT fascinating book, *The Chronicles of a Clay Farm*, contains among the sketches which embellish its lively pages one which represents two dogs both straining to reach a bowl of food. They are coupled by a stout chain which has been caught by a post between them and effectually prevents either from reaching the coveted object. The legend below the picture runs : " In which there is Antagonism of interest yet Mutuality of object." In the chapter entitled " Landlord and Tenant," to which this pictorial allegory is a pendant, Wren Hoskyns says : " Place yourself in your neighbour's position . . . and look back upon yourself from *that point* : the thing is difficult, and there is little danger of your getting too perfect in the art of looking on your interest with your neighbour's eyes. Let the antagonism between you be for the time imaginary, the mutuality real. So you will see your own *best* interest and happiness in truer light and leisure by taking your neighbour's judgment, even for his own ends, into council with your own. The too frequent practice is to do the exact reverse ; to realise the antagonism and make the mutuality a fiction and a humbug. What the effect is—first upon the soil, secondly upon the labourer, and thirdly on the public wealth, wherever this mistaken system has been long in operation, let him say, who has seen a country, a district, or even a single acre, which has been the arena of pure unmitigated *selfishness*, on the part of its owners and occupiers, and all who come between the two. The signs are not easily mistakable—beggared labourers, beggared parish funds, and beggared public finances can be recognised afar."

This was written nearly seventy years ago. The

“ antagonism of interest ” between landlord and tenant which then subsisted was, like everything connected with the land, the result of historical causes. The terms on which farms were held on payment of money rentals had gradually grown out of, and been grafted upon, the manorial system under which tenants were bound by a variety of conditions, of service and otherwise. The conservatism of the rural mind combined with the complexity of the legal instinct had carried forward as much of the old system as could possibly be squeezed, by the utmost ingenuity, into the new. The result was that farm leases and agreements were in most cases a jumble of restrictive and irritating conditions which were only endurable when, as commonly happened, they were tacitly ignored. These antiquated and impracticable documents embodied the general principles which governed the relations of landlord and tenant, modified only, in some districts, by the “ custom of the country,” which the common sense of the agricultural community, free from legal assistance, had established as equitable.

The legal position of the tenant of a farm at the time Wren Hoskyns wrote was intolerable, but it was endured because over the greater part of the country landowners adopted his precepts and looked at the position from the other man’s point of view. Generally speaking, on the large estates of hereditary landowners there was a reasonable spirit of “ give and take ” which maintained good relations in spite of unreasonable documents. But, as at all periods of history since land became a saleable commodity, new men from time to time acquired the old acres without necessarily acquiring the old traditions. The intrusion of the business man in an industry conducted on unbusiness-like principles naturally led to trouble. Tenants, especially after their relative political power was increased at the end of the “ sixties,” began to agitate for the redress of their grievances by Parliament, and in 1875 the first Agricultural Holdings Act was passed. Much scorn was subsequently expended on that measure as being merely permissive. In those days compulsion was less popular with the legislature than it has since become, but, in fact, this enactment marked

a great step forward by recognising for the first time by statute the right of a tenant to recover on quitting his holding compensation for the unexhausted value of his improvements.

It is interesting to recall, as an echo of far-off controversies, that the subject of land tenure occupied a prominent position in the pronouncements of political leaders at the General Election of 1874. When dissolving Parliament Mr. Gladstone stated that measures relating to the occupation and transfer of land would require prompt attention by the next House of Commons, and Mr. Disraeli announced, in a speech at Newport Pagnell, that the importance of a measure for securing to occupiers compensation for the unexhausted value of their improvements "could not be exaggerated," and that he and his friends would support the principle of such a measure. By the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1883 the payment of compensation for unexhausted improvements was made compulsory, and since that time other measures have been passed for the benefit of sitting tenants, culminating in Part II of the Agriculture Act, 1920.

It was while the provisions subsequently embodied in this Act—with others which did not become law—were under discussion (in April, 1920) that Mr. E. W. Langford, then President of the National Farmers' Union, read a paper on "Security of Tenure." In opening the subject he referred to the sales of estates then taking place on a widespread scale as creating a highly insecure and intolerable position for tenant farmers and welcomed the declarations of Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Lee that it was intended to place on the statute book "a long-delayed measure of reform." He repudiated any intention of putting forward a case in opposition to the interests of landlords, and asserted that there were many excellent landlords of whom the countryside is rightly proud and whose elimination would be "a blow to the agricultural industry as well as to the national life." He added, "The action of landowners in reducing rents in times of depression has proved of incalculable value to the State, let alone to those directly concerned—and it is unnecessary in saying so to discuss whether business or

patriotic motives actuated those landowners in arriving at their decision."

Mr. Langford recapitulated the assurances given by ministers and particularly by the Prime Minister in his famous speech at Caxton Hall, when the agricultural policy of the Government was laid down, and continued :—

All that farmers are asking is that legislative effect should be given to the promises made in the Premier's speech at Caxton Hall. Farmers are not asking for "fixity" of tenure, but they do say that existing legislation providing compensation for disturbance stands in need of strengthening. Farmers contend first, that it should be adequate in any case ; secondly, that where a landlord gives notice to a tenant to quit for capricious reasons the compensation payable should be on a penal scale ; and, thirdly, that a tenant should receive full compensation whether his holding is acquired by a public authority or otherwise. It is contended, therefore, that with the exception of the second case defined by the Premier, adequate compensation should be payable in each instance except where upon enquiry it is shown that an increase of rent demanded is reasonable and is not a charge upon the capital expenditure of the tenant. To give effect to the two suggested scales of compensation, the following amendment of Section XI of the Agricultural Holdings Act (1908) is advanced :—

A tenant on quitting his holding should (in addition to compensation for improvements, if any) receive full compensation for the loss or expenses directly attributable to his quitting the holding which he may unavoidably incur upon or in connection with the sale or removal of his household goods, or his implements of husbandry, produce, or farm stock, on or used in connection with the holding, and, in addition, a sum equivalent to two years' rent should be paid in all cases where notice to quit is given, or a renewal of a lease or tenancy is refused, because the land is required for public purposes or because the owner wishes to regain possession of the holding in order to cultivate it himself or to place a member of his family or other person upon it. In cases of capricious notice to quit, or refusal to renew a lease or tenancy, the sum payable in addition to compensation for loss or expenses directly attributable to the tenant having to quit his holding which he may unavoidably incur upon or in connection with the sale or removal of his household goods, or his implements of husbandry, produce, or farm stock, on or used in connection with the holding, should be the equivalent of not less than three years' rent nor more than five years' rent.

After referring to a speech by Lord Lee, in which he stated that "there should be some recognised form of arbitration open to tenant and landlord alike, to which either of them can appeal on a matter of rent, and which will have the power of fixing a rent up or down as the justice of the particular case may require," Mr. Langford proceeded:—

In cases where notice to quit is given, or where the renewal of a lease or tenancy is refused, in order to raise rent, some machinery must be provided for ascertaining whether the increased rental asked is, having regard to all the circumstances, reasonable or not. If the increase be found to be reasonable, then no compensation for disturbance should be payable, but direction should be given that no increase of rent is to be deemed reasonable which is shown to be consequent upon capital outlay by the tenant, whether it be in the form of money or brains. Should the proposed increase of rent be deemed unreasonable, then the case should be treated as one of capricious notice or refusal to renew a lease or tenancy, and compensation should be payable accordingly.

The machinery proposed by the National Farmers' Union for dealing with disputed matters is the institution of a panel of arbitrators; all cases would go before a single arbitrator, who would be assisted by two assessors—one selected by the landlord and the other by the tenant. The assessors would simply act as technical advisers, and the decision in every case would be that of the arbitrator alone. Obviously, some such machinery must be set up, as much in fairness to the landlord as to the tenant, and the reference of disputes to an arbitrator for decision cannot be held to savour in any way of a "rent court."

No compensation should be payable for disturbance where notice is given because of bad cultivation. Again, in order to eliminate any question of doubt as to the fact, landlords should be placed under an obligation to give reasons for giving notice to quit or refusing to renew a lease or tenancy.

In the little book in which the National Farmers' Union has put forward its policy for the restoration of agricultural prosperity, the important clauses of the Agricultural Holdings Act are considered seriatim, and I shall not weary you with a review of the amendments suggested, but I should like to refer to those connected with the first schedule to the Act.

Means should be adopted for enabling necessary improvements comprised in Part I of the first schedule to be executed in the event of the refusal of the landlord to give his consent,

or his inability to carry them out. The following items should be added to the third part of the schedule :—

High farming, including deep cultivation, special care of roads and fences, or other acts whereby the rental value of the holding has been increased or maintained against a falling market.

Haulage done by the tenant at the landlord's request in the course of making improvements in the holding.

An item securing compensation for any improvement increasing the value of the holding as an agricultural holding.

These are the main features of the reforms demanded by farmers, and they look with confidence to the Agriculture Bill to be introduced in the House of Commons after the Easter recess. Landowners and farmers met towards the end of last year under the chairmanship of Lord Lee, to give him their views of this pressing question, and I am convinced that the Agriculture Bill will represent a very decided step forward towards the regeneration of rural England. I hold that conviction because, in Lord Lee, we have a man who is keenly alive to the necessities of the situation, who will be content with no half measures and is determined to do his utmost to repair the evils wrought by a generation of State neglect. I have said that it is my considered opinion that landowners and tenants alike will gain by the enactment of security of tenure. I believe also that agricultural labour stands to gain by that which will benefit the employers. It is only by courageous reform that lasting prosperity can be restored to the country-side, and with lasting prosperity will come those improvements in the conditions of the workers which are so greatly to be desired.

To sum up, then, Security of Tenure is a reform which will benefit all sections of those who live by the land, and I appeal to all sections to give the full weight of their support to the Minister of Agriculture in his task of placing the Agriculture Bill on the Statute Book of the Realm.

Mr. Langford's paper was followed by an animated discussion in which, in addition to several members of the Club, the Marquess of Crewe, Mr. Harold Cox and Sir Trustram Eve, as visitors, took part. Lord Crewe remarked that as a landlord he probably looked at the subject from a different point of view to that of Mr. Langford, but not, he hoped, in a different spirit. He was interested to hear that the N.F.U. did not demand fixity of tenure, which involved free sale and dual ownership. As to compensation for continuous good farming it seemed to convey the im-

pression of granting a bonus to the man who farmed well, but if he had done so it might be assumed to have been in his own and the national interest. Mr. Harold Cox enquired why if farmers wanted security of tenure they did not take long leases. Why should they not ask for 99-year leases? It appeared to be only a matter of custom and this would get over the difficulty of finding the capital to buy the land. Sir Trustram Eve put himself in the place of a landowner confronted with Mr. Langford's proposals, and said they would be likely to scare him into selling his estate. Many were hesitating whether to sell or not and the adoption of these proposals would decide them and would let in the land speculator. Among the members who spoke was Mr. Mansell, who confessed to being old-fashioned enough to prefer large estates well managed to occupying ownership. A farmer on a good estate was practically settled for life. The question of cumulative fertility was a difficult one and it must be remembered that while an outgoing tenant must be fairly treated there was also the incoming tenant to consider and the balance must be held between the two.

In May, 1919, a paper was read on "The Origins of English Land Tenure," by Mr. A. G. L. Rogers, whose hereditary aptitude for dealing with the historical and economic aspects of agricultural questions enabled him to lay before the Club an illuminating account of the processes through which the land system developed—or as he expressed it "to present the phenomena of the present day in the light of the past" so as to better understand "how the present system of land tenure in England came into existence and perhaps realise in some degree the forces which have moulded it in its present form and may guide its future destinies." After a reference to the fact that the English land system differs in many important respects from that of every other country in the world, Mr. Rogers continued:—

So familiar are we with the present system of English tenancy that I think it will be a surprise to some to learn how many different phases it has passed through in the process of development. Still more surprising will it be to learn that there was a time when the system of land tenure throughout most of Europe was



practically the same and that in 1871 the conditions in parts of Germany were almost the same as they were in England in 1086, when William the Conqueror was compiling the great Survey known as Domesday Book, or that the tenure in Ireland in the reign of Queen Elizabeth was almost identical with that which prevailed in England a thousand years before. In England the system grew and developed by slow stages. It never stood still for long. Elsewhere it remained unaltered for centuries, only to be swept away by a revolution. With all its anomalies and apparent paradoxes the English system is the result of growth, and consequently is a living system, capable of further growth and of bearing valuable fruit.

In order to understand the causes of this vitality and vigour we must jump back about thirteen hundred years or so, and take a walk through Kent or Middlesex, as it was soon after the first settlement of the English in this country. Of course, the countryside will look very different, not only will all the houses have disappeared but we shall miss the well-made roads and the hedges by their sides, with which we are familiar. For the most part the country will be moor and swamp, or covered with dense forests of oak and beech, in which all sorts of wild animals, including wild oxen and wolves, are roaming. Except for the great Roman roads which traverse England, there are merely a few bridle paths, and we must make our way over the land as best we can. There is very little sign of real agriculture. Large droves of swine under the charge of a herdsman are feeding in the forest, and in the more fertile meadows, especially those by the river-side, known as hams, there are some oxen, or more probably cows, grazing. As we pass on we see in the distance some signs of human habitation, and we are evidently approaching a village. We must be careful to blow a horn as we walk up to it or we shall be mistaken for outlaws and robbers and get short shrift, but having established our *bona fides* in this way we can move on. We pass over the meadows and approach the huts which appear to be long one-storied houses capable of holding a number of persons, probably very similar to those houses occupied by the Red Indians of North America at the time of the first European colonisation. These are known as "mansions," a technical expression which has a long history, and the whole village does not contain more than half a dozen of them for the whole family—father, mother, children, brothers, sisters, cousins—the whole family in its widest sense lives under one roof. Not far off a field is being ploughed for wheat. The plough is an immensely heavy wooden instrument and drawn by eight oxen, four abreast, and the ploughman walks backward in front of them, holding their bridles and taking care that each does its fair share of work. The furrows are drawn for about a

hundred yards before the plough is wheeled round and the return furrows ploughed. I should be glad if some experienced ploughman would tell me how close these two furrows would be. At the distance of every 22 yards a balk of grass or stubble is left, and the area so enclosed, known as an acre, though ploughed in common, is the private property of an individual. The break-up of the unity of the family has undoubtedly gone so far. But only for a season. The rough fence erected round the ploughed land to keep off the cattle is pulled down when the harvest is reaped and the stubble becomes the common grazing land of the community again. Time does not permit a more detailed examination of Anglo-Saxon Agriculture, and after all we are out to discover the system of land tenure. So we must find out the reeve or headman of the village and ask him, "Who owns this land, and what rent do you pay for it?" Of course he has not the least idea what we mean, but after a great deal of explanation, I expect he will say that the land belongs to the hide—that is, the family living in the "mansion" we have already noticed,—and that no rent is paid, but the king, that is to say the head of the kin, for that is what the word means, has the right of free maintenance with all his following for so many nights in the year when he comes round dealing out his judgments under the law of the tribe. But this rent, paid in kind, is already fixed in amount, and more cannot well be exacted. This right, which originally existed all over Northern Europe, survived in full force in Ireland down to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and was only abolished with the Brehon law. A similar rent was also paid to the priest of the village in England and under the name of tithe continued to be collected in kind till the nineteenth century. The nature of this service is so remarkable that before we leave we must try to ascertain whether these men are "free," as held by some writers, or hold by a semi-servile tenancy as believed by others, for the point has often been discussed and is not unimportant. Again, we shall get no rational reply from the reeve, but I suspect that the true answer is these men are subject to no lord other than the king as far as the tenure of their land is concerned, but they are not free as we understand the word. They are subject to the sternest tyrant that ever lived—tribal custom.

Let us now skip four or five hundred years and go over the same ground in the eleventh century, say just about the time that the Domesday Book is being compiled. The Roman roads will be almost obliterated except in certain places. The dense forests have grown much smaller and definite green roads used by travellers on horseback are common everywhere, for pilgrims and pedlars are constantly moving about the country. The village, however, has altered a little in appearance. The large family

houses have disappeared and a number of smaller huts have arisen, each occupied by a householder and his immediate family, that is to say, his wife and children. They are built as a rule close together and form what we might call a street. The cultivation of the arable land is on much the same lines except that the heavy cumbersome plough drawn by eight oxen has gone as a rule and a lighter wooden plough drawn by four or two oxen is commoner. As a rule each man ploughs his own acre, and reaps his own harvest, but the same open field cultivation remains the order of the day. There are no hedges round the arable fields, but the balks are now permanently grass or weeds, for they are never ploughed up. The same system of common pasture for the meadows and of the stubble after the harvest is pursued just as it was five hundred years before. The general standard of Agriculture has improved a little and more attention is paid to arable than before, for the community is passing slowly from the more purely pastoral condition of the early settlers to a more definite system of tillage. This is chiefly shown in the area under cultivation rather than in the method of dealing with it. In the earlier period there was as a rule, I believe, only one field under cultivation, and this was ploughed year after year without rest or abandoned for a new site. Now, however, that the population has increased, and the old family group has been split up into a number of households, more land has been put under the plough. There are two or perhaps even three fields under tillage, cultivated in turn, and one of them is always under fallow for a year. I presume that as soon as the advantage of autumn sowing was realised, the breaking up of a second and even a third field became a necessity. The new fields are, however, divided into acre strips exactly as before and in strict equality, and the householder now finds himself cultivating perhaps thirty acre strips scattered through the whole estate. This statement applies only to the land within the boundaries of the village or manor, to use an expression which is just coming into use, for outside of it there are clearings in the forest or fields in the open country where small farms are cultivated on lines approximating to those with which we are now familiar. These farms, however, are not occupied by the men of the village. They are the lord's demesne or the land of the freeholders.

If we follow the same course as we did when we visited the village in the sixth century, we shall get a very different answer from the reeve. To the question, "Who is the owner of the land?" we shall be told it is such and such a lord—that is to say, the King perhaps, or the Abbot of Westminster, or the Earl Waltheof, or Count Eudo. The fact is, the King has bit by bit surrendered his rights of free entertainment, or a great part of

them, to some monastery, or one of his thegns, perhaps even to the reeve of the vill himself, for a money payment. In some cases the King has acquired the whole village as his own property. Communal ownership has practically disappeared and feudalism has begun. Every man is "commended" to some lord who, in return for certain services, undertakes to defend him and guarantee him in his possessions. But within the village the land is not yet the absolute property of the landlord. Apart from the men who, in the words of Domesday, may go with their land to whatever lord they will, the villanus or occupier of land in the village is still a privileged person and cannot be dispossessed. He is bound to the land, but the land is also bound to him. But when we come to ask what rent he pays we find a desperately complicated system. Sometimes he still pays "the food of one night" as formerly; sometimes he has commuted his payments in kind for labour services on the lord's demesne, sometimes there is a strange mixture of both, with all sorts of other strange duties added. There are, moreover, a certain number of men who hold land in the manor, but outside the limits of the old village, who render "suit and service" in the lord's court, but do not work for him. These men are called freeholders. If we try to find whether the villagers are free or not, we shall have the same difficulty as before, for freedom connoted a very different thing to them from what it means to us. We shall be told, I think, that the men who work are in a servile condition, while those who render other dues are free. Times change and we change with them, and the last thing that we think of labour in return for the right to hold property is that it is servile.

Let us once more make a jump of three or four hundred years and revisit the villages we have already described. Again the country has changed a good deal and the forests and waste lands have shrunk in extent. The wild oxen have now all gone, except in a few private herds, but the wolves are almost as abundant as ever and do a great deal of damage. The roads are now good for travelling, for there is a vast population always on the move, and commerce is now well established. The result of this is seen in the village. The larger houses are substantially built of timber, and the new stone church that has just been erected is a proof of the increased prosperity of the district. Even the houses of the villagers are larger and more comfortable, though unfortunately many are empty and deserted, for the pestilence which visited the place some years ago swept away many of the inhabitants. Those that were left fell victims to another disease known as "labour unrest," an invariable sign of improving economic conditions, and they exhibited the usual symptoms with which we are all familiar. Unluckily the medical practice of those days was barbarous, and the chief official remedies were blood letting and tight bandaging,

a treatment which we all agree now is inefficacious. Fortunately in England we have generally adopted a sedative treatment for such diseases as well, and however severe the official practice may be the actual parties to the dispute have generally found an easier way of coming to a settlement. At the end of the fourteenth century, therefore, we find that the lord of the manor, instead of attempting to enforce his absolute rights to labour service from the villeins, agrees to commute their services for a cash payment, and instead of attempting to cultivate his demesne by enforced labour, semi-servile or otherwise, bargains with the bailiff or reeve to take over the land and the stock on a lease for a number of years. The result was, of course, highly satisfactory to both parties. In a comparatively short time the farmer, as he must now be called, made sufficient profit to take over the stock entirely and renew it at his own cost, leaving to the lord nothing but his land and his interest in improving it. At the same time, as he has no claim on any man's labour, he was obliged to go into the market, so to speak, and hire labourers to cultivate his land at a daily wage. From this date we have the elements of the modern system of land tenancy, bound up, as was said before, with the landlord, the farmer and the worker. Of course, the organisation is still in its infancy, there were many estates, especially those owned by Ecclesiastical Corporations, which were cultivated by labour rents for many years afterwards, in fact, till the Reformation. There were for centuries after a number of small freeholders, and for a long time there were many men who combined farming with other trades. Indeed, the agricultural labourer is hardly yet differentiated, as the skilled industrial tradesmen are, though his skill is often not less than theirs. But I have only undertaken to introduce the origins of land tenure in England. Its development must be left for another occasion.

Let us now recapitulate the points to which I have drawn your attention, for I fear that a series of pictures, though perhaps more interesting than a bare statement, is not so lucid. In the earliest stages of English settlement in this country there was no such thing as private ownership in land. It all belonged to the community. But the community was very different from the State. Indeed, there was no such thing as the State in the sense that we know it now. The family was the organisation for purposes of land tenure, though for purposes of justice, military operations, and so forth, the combination of families or hides in hundreds was recognised. The village community then had no judicial powers. The families were more or less loosely bound together in tribes, though that word was never used by our ancestors. They were the kin and the king, the head of the kin, was entitled to free quarters for one or more nights a year. At a later date

the necessity for some higher form of organisation, due to the wars between the different tribes and with the Welsh and afterwards the Danes, leads to the need for every man to be commended to some lord and to be associated with a number of other free citizens as security for his duties. It is a mistake to suppose that this implies any loss of freedom by necessity. It is merely the growth of citizenship with its usual accompaniment of mutual responsibility. But under the influence of the Norman lawyers the position of the villein, which was originally a privileged one, becomes in theory at least a subservient one. But as far as his tenancy is concerned he is never worse off at any one period than at another. The obligation to feed the king changes to an obligation to work for the lord and finally to pay a rent in commutation of the services due to him. The status of the villein merely seems lower because that of the other classes has improved faster. It is simply a question of relative progress. This is the first point I have attempted to make. Of course, I am quite aware that this is a very sketchy and one-sided picture. If there is any professed historian here to-night, and I hope there is not, I must explain that I realise fully that I have omitted all reference to fifty other influences that were at work all the time, that much of what I have said is disputable and unproved, and that some of it is frankly conjecture. But I would reply that I am not trying to write an historical essay, but provide a theme for discussion, and that in order to bring out certain points I have been obliged to give undue emphasis to them, even, perhaps, distort them.

Having thus attractively dealt with the history of his subject Mr. Rogers, in conclusion, referred briefly to what he termed his second point, which was deliberately challenging :

The progress of events we have just examined is marked by a curious change in what is private and what is common. In the earliest days, the means of production—the land—was held common, but the produce was the property of the individual. As civilisation advances the means of production become the property of the individual, while the produce is the property of the community, for everything which is produced by a farmer, or for matter of that by a manufacturer, beyond what he can consume himself, is the property of the community, which each member can obtain for himself by the surrender of his labour or the labour of others which he has acquired, and is epitomised in that peculiar token we call money. It is interesting to see how this development has arisen, but we cannot live on academic discussions alone, however interesting they may be. It is practical problems of everyday life that we want if we are to keep our

mental teeth sound and our mental digestions active, and I suspect that every one here will be tempted to ask what will be the future of land tenure in this country. Now the study of history is of very little practical use in life, but it can do one thing, especially if long periods are taken. It can trace the course of development of any given institution or theory of government, and it can show what influences have moulded it or turned it in this or that direction. What will be the future of land tenure in this country? Now, it is a fair assumption that if the influences remain unchanged for a long period the development will be on similar lines in the future. There are a large number of people who believe in nationalising the means of production, and the land is the most popular of all the articles the private possession of which they propose to abolish in favour of State ownership. To those people I would point out that English history shows the whole tendency of development to be in the other direction, at any rate in the past, and I would ask them to show me what new influence has arisen in the present to counteract this movement. The stream flows onward under the pressure of natural laws. We may guide and direct the stream in one way or the other, but we cannot overrule these laws. The utmost we can do is to utilise them for our own end. Nor is there any question as to the uses to which the water is to be put when it has been brought down from the mountain-side to where we are all waiting for it. It must be admitted at once that the fundamental basis of every industry is the maintenance under proper conditions of those engaged in it in the first place, and its utility to the community as a whole in the second. The point simply is: Are the laws which govern the actions of mankind identical in character with those which govern the rest of nature, and, if so, can we get what we want by ignoring or deliberately flouting them?

In the subsequent discussion Mr. Henry Hobhouse was inclined to think that the present-day tendency was to put private ownership under State control, but not to go the length of Nationalisation. There would no doubt before long be a Commission on the Nationalisation of the Land, but the time had not yet come. There were good and bad landlords and all ought to be levelled up and made to do their duty in respect of housing, cultivation, etc. Mr. Patterson, a visitor, said that Cumberland and Westmorland had originally been a No Man's Land and the King had allowed people to settle at a very low rent to protect the

country. In time turf huts were built, and later wooden and slate. Charles II saw an opportunity of making money, and gave notice that he would take possession of the land. As there was a law against assembly the tenants all turned up at church, and one man suggested that a collection of £5,000 should be made to gain security. Later the King wanted more, and sold his rights to Sir J. Lowther, who said the woodlands belonged to the Lord. The tenants again met at Plumpton and appointed three men to go to London ; they fought and won a law case and their total expenses were £33 13s. 4d. They improved the land, and some of the families who took possession 300 years ago were still there. The State had no right to take away the value of the improvements done on the property.

Mr. R. Small, a visitor, was unable to agree with Mr. Rogers that the tendency was not in the direction of public ownership of land. Land near towns became more valuable and the owners benefited, whereas if the State owned it the community would benefit. Mr. Higdon was disappointed that the paper had not concluded with an advocacy of Land Nationalisation. The people were now shut off the land, and the whole system of land tenure was as bad as it could be.

The reader of these pages who has persevered thus far will long since have realised that the rules of debate at the Club were elastic and that no serious attempt was made to restrict those who joined in the discussions to a rigid adherence to the subject-matter of the introductory paper. But the sternest martinet in the Chair would hesitate to define very closely the limits of the subject of Land Tenure. It embraces not only all the various conditions under which land owned by one man may be occupied by another, but also includes other forms from peasant proprietorship to State ownership, as well as joint ownership or occupancy, communal farming, profit-sharing, co-partnership, metayage, etc. I can, however, only refer to one other paper, in this connection, read by Mr. George Nicholls in May, 1918, on "The Place of the Small holder in the Problem of Reconstruction." Mr. Nicholls started by avowing his



belief that the small holder's place in the reconstruction problem was of first importance. The following are the salient points of the paper :—

Given sufficient capital, my own opinion is that the small holder stands high as a food producer. He enjoys a life which is the envy of every labourer, and I know from intimate knowledge of many hundreds of them that they reap a genuine measure of success, and not only enjoy their independence, but take a real interest in the full use and highest productivity of their holdings, and in many cases that I know the land they cultivate is producing far more than it did before they were installed.

I readily admit that much has to be done to improve Agriculture, and small holdings cultivation. Far too often the men placed on the holdings, and sometimes by the county councils, are handicapped by excessive rents.

The small man ought to have his land on as favourable terms as the large farmer. Of course, he must be ready, and he is ready, to pay the extra cost of the inevitable equipping the smaller farm.

The State should do more to educate and encourage co-operation among the small cultivators. One has to remember that the very men who make successful small holders are temperamentally up against co-operation ; but I believe they are ready for advance in this direction, for they are beginning to realise its value. County councils might establish colonies of small holdings, and place one man of ability and character on each colony. Upon one such person the success of co-operation depends, and he might be the county council representative, and carry out experimental and demonstration cultivation among the other holders. Not an official to boss it over the others, but a man working a holding, and demonstrating to others how it can be done, and remember good cultivators are keen imitators.

Say for example a Danish practical cultivator might have a holding and live on it, and cultivate on the best Danish small cultivator principles, showing others how to do it, and giving advice to any willing to receive it. That is better than pamphlets and lecturers, and would benefit a whole colony of small holders.

Money on easy terms also should be available for the small cultivator.

*The social problem* among small holders will, I believe, largely solve itself. A contented flourishing population in the rural areas will soon create a social atmosphere suited to its own needs.

If evidence were needed to prove that small holdings tend to stop the drift from the country-side, I would call attention

to such places as Deeping St. Nicholas (parish) and nineteen parishes round Spalding, Lincs.

From 1881 to 1891 the population had decreased 2,282, but from 1901 to 1911 showed an *increase* of about 1,500, due largely to the development of allotments and small holdings in that area.

Burwell, Cambridgeshire, is another village where a Crown farm of 917 acres was divided up among small holders in 1906. That farm in 1905-6 was managed by one of your *expert agents* for the Crown at a Loss, and showed a loss over the three years it was run by the manager. It was then divided among 80 tenants. The result has been *more labour* on the land; *more produce* from it; *more cattle, pigs and poultry*; a number of *new houses* were erected; and *the traders* had more and a better class of customer, and with more money to spend. There the census returns showed the population decreased in 1871 to 1881 from 2,106 to 1,949; but from 1901 to 1911 it had increased from 1,974 to 2,144. In other words, you had lost 157 from 1871 to 1881. You gained again 170 from 1901 to 1911. That may not be a sensational move upwards; nevertheless, it is in the right direction.

The same is true in other districts.

The small holding has also assisted wages long before the Labourers' Union had been established in many districts.

The small holder has a second string to his bow, and he is not forced to work for some one else for a low wage; and as he does not need to employ men regularly, he can afford to pay the men a higher wage for the days he does employ them. This has a tendency to help the average wages upwards. I have no prejudice against any particular system or scheme; but I believe, if you desire to create a genuine interest among the workers, you must give them a chance to become something more than a mere day labourer for another man. I know many of them work long hours, and work hard, but that is because of the handicap of high rents and heavy rates imposed upon them. They would rather do that and be free to work when they like, and have a day off when they choose without having to ask some one else if they may.

It is only the theorist who cycles past them in the summer evenings, and sees them hard at it at eight o'clock p.m., calls them land slaves, worse placed than labourers. But the small holder smiles, he knows better. He knows a few hours extra on his holding at a special time among weeds will save him weeks of work and worry later, and give him free days to use as he likes; and the labourer who leaves work at five o'clock envies the small holder who works not by the clock time but by the seasonal demands of his growing crops. He knows no clock time, he seldom looks at his watch, he wastes no time watching

the foreman or manager. He watches for showers and sunny mornings, and up with the lark looks forward to harvest with hope. And in winter he has his *flour, potatoes, bacon, eggs, milk and butter*, and can crowd his heaviest work into the best weather, under nobody's dictation, but his own common sense. And he is not the man to waste corners and headlands and wide fence spaces—he pays too much rent to waste the land.

I know there are a few careless small holders. So there are bad farmers ; but the small man is soon hunted up and threatened if he does not improve, not always so the large farmer.

I am out to re-establish rural life upon a basis that will give our returning men something to live and labour for. Not an easy time for them, but a reward for a hard time, and every assistance during that hard struggle. Something to aim at and look forward to ; and the father is anxious to see his son set up in a small holding, and will sacrifice almost anything to give him a start.

And what a competition there is for every vacant holding : do let my son have it ? And these are the men to make it pay : they have been trained for it, and love it, and if any of the lads do not love it they clear off before they are twenty.

Critics are too apt to chip the small holder and pronounce him a failure, and agriculturists very largely envy him his opportunity.

Given a fair chance he will generally succeed, and will, undoubtedly, increase the production as he is doing already in numbers of cases.

The industrial farm, it may be argued, is different from the multiple farms of Lincolnshire for instance, but in some ways the analogy may perhaps be allowed. I don't know anyone interested in the welfare of rural England who will praise the system of multiple farming.

The immediate effect of the accumulation of separate farms in one occupation is the withdrawal of the sitting tenant, and placing a foreman in the farmhouse formerly occupied by the tenant farmer. In South Lincolnshire some twenty-five to thirty such farmers and their families have been displaced. This removes persons interested in the village, is injurious to traders and every description of social movement, and religious organisations also suffer.

It becomes more difficult to find good men to go on the representative local bodies, and in many cases the large farmer is able to avoid obligation to house the workers, except the *head horseman and cattleman*, besides the *foreman*. The other labourers are drawn from villages and towns some distance away. Much of the work is given out to gang-masters, who collect their men and convey them to and from work.

Irishmen are imported for harvest, and in many cases live under wretched conditions. These multiple men boast they can manage whole parishes with the motor and telephone, and with a system of transferring men and machinery from one farm to another they declare themselves able to run whole counties. That may effect economies in some directions, but it is not very attractive to the worker to settle on the land. And I believe such a system is a grave danger to rural life. It is bad in all its bearings.

It may be considered scientific farming, but I believe our system of small cultivators will and does give better results all round. At least that is my experience, and I, therefore, pin my faith to the small cultivator.

In the discussion which followed, Mr. (now Sir) Douglas Newton, visitor, said that in his county 10,500 acres had been acquired for small holdings and they had been a great success. Undoubtedly there was land hunger in certain districts. It would not be fair to ask the community to find capital for the man with no experience and no capital. The cardinal points for successful small holdings were: (1) Good land; (2) accessible markets; (3) sufficient capital; (4) good house and buildings; (5) experience in Agriculture; (6) hard work. In addition rural industries were a great advantage to the small holder. He agreed with Mr. Nicholls that the small holding must be confined to suitable land and men.

Mr. Hewitt described how he and five others had taken over a farm of 60 acres. Where two men had been employed and three cows kept, now nine cows were kept and eight men got a living, although the rent had been doubled. He advocated the planting of fruit trees in the hedgerows. If kept low they would afford shelter for the crops and stock, and would not cause much waste of land. He thought the small holder should be put on the same footing as the large farmer as regards rent. He himself paid £12 more for his 12 acres than the previous occupier had done.

Mr. W. R. Smith was not altogether certain that the nation could look forward to small holdings as the one means of saving British Agriculture. If the workers' freedom could be established by small holdings and the land cultivated in the best way from a national point of view, he thought

they should be encouraged. This view had been rather disturbed by Mr. Newton, who had said that the land must be good, the man a hard worker, and some rural industry added. He would like more evidence. Comparison had been made between large farms and small holdings, but were the conditions comparable? There would be great changes in the future, but would small holdings be the best conditions in which they could be applied? With the development of science, could small holdings hope to hold the same position in the future as they had in the past?

Mrs. Wilkins said she regarded the creation of small holdings more as a national than an agricultural policy. We wanted a small holding race. Very few of the holdings under 50 acres were self-supporting, but were carried on as an adjunct to some other industry. In Holland she had been struck by the connection of industries with the land, and gave as an instance fishermen being available at harvest time. In England many men engaged in the boot trade had allotments, and when they became too old to work at their trade they used their allotments as old age pensions.

Mr. Acland said Mrs. Wilkins had started a fertile line of thought. He did not believe small holdings and industrial farms were antagonistic. He hoped that small holdings would lead to co-operation and the cultivation of areas in common with the equal sharing of proceeds.

Mr. S. Kidner said a wide line of country had been opened. Mrs. Wilkins had said that there must be a subsidiary industry to small holdings. He thought that new industries would have to be arranged as the old ones would not be a success. If we only had small holdings and large farms where would they get a ladder? All the small holders in his county were doing well on the land he had helped to get for them. His experience was that they farmed on similar lines to the large farmer and not intensively.

Mr. F. E. Green said on his 24 acres he had made a profit of £220 with the help of his wife, who made the butter, and one very lame old man. With regard to reconstruction, he would like to see each county with its small holding colony. He had asked some New Zealanders if they would rather

work on a co-operative small holding colony or on a large farm intensively worked in gangs, in a spirit of comradeship, running their own show. The New Zealanders said they would prefer the latter.

Sir C. Bathurst (now Lord Bledisloe) said the subject had been treated from different standpoints, national, productive, human, political, and social. He did not oppose Mr. Acland's view that large farms and small holdings were not antagonistic, but he thought it required the modification that the medium-sized farms were essential to form the ladder. He thought county councils should be given opportunities to develop small holdings on a territorial basis in their counties. The production standpoint was the most important, but the country also wanted men of good physique. He would like to see Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire earmarked for the small holder. In the south and west there must be subsidiary industries; suitable land, co-operation, good transport, marketing facilities, a fair rent, and the help of the women were the main points. We must train women in Agriculture if the small holding was to be a success. He hoped that they were not going to pit the large farm against the small holding, as there was room for both.

Mr. Orwin said that, although the discussion arose from his remarks at the last meeting of the Club, he did not want to advocate the large farm against the small holding. From a national point of view too much stress should not be laid on the small holding. He thought Mr. Smith had put his finger on the weakness. Nothing had been said about machinery, but you must have the best land and the best men. The last thing he wanted to see was the woman on the land; she had enough work to do at home. Mr. Nicholls objected to work for the foreman; he himself had worked for some one all his life and everybody was in the same position.

Mr. George Dallas congratulated Mr. Nicholls on the rosy picture he had painted. If the greatest production of food was the thing to aim at, there was a great future for the industrial farm, but that did not exclude the small holding.

Small holdings flourished in counties where the wages were low; in high-wage counties there was no desire for small holdings. He was not sure that it was the life we should offer to people in rural districts if they had to work early till late. Little had been made of the point that if there were great changes in mechanical science it would not be possible for small holders to buy machines except with the development of co-operation. Small holdings might be one way of attracting men to the land, but probably it was not the best way.

Mr. Christopher Turnor read several answers to a questionnaire he had circulated to small holders in all counties in England. Many said they were successful, but suggested among other things that the Danish system should be adopted, credit banks supplied, expert advice made available, and co-operation encouraged. He referred to a small holding run by a Dane which showed a profit last year of £16 per acre. He said he farmed 500 acres, but could not show such a profit. Were small holdings economic? He thought they were from a financial point of view, but if we took the broader meaning—that wealth meant welfare—there was no possible doubt as to their advantage.

So many men, so many opinions. The controversy is perennial. My recollections of agricultural discussions at various places where men meet and talk go back to the early "eighties," when the relations of landlord and tenant, the relative advantages of large and small farms, the economic disabilities and sociological benefits of small holdings and all the issues implied in the phrase Land Tenure were bandied about in ardent and conflicting advocacy. To adapt Omar Khayyám :—

Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
 Farmers and farms, and heard great Argument  
 About it and about: but evermore  
 Came out by the same Door as in I went.

But time has brought changes. Never before, until the Agricultural Club brought them together, have these subjects been discussed by landowners, large farmers, small

holders and labourers in the same forum. The theoretical arguments have not altered, but there are new influences and novel forces which are gathering strength and will in the long run determine the issues. The "antagonism of interest" between landlord and tenant, and the extent to which their relations shall be controlled by legislation, will no longer be left to them to fight out, or argue out, between them. The provision of small holdings and the rights and status of the small holder will not be left to the decision of Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees or even of Government Departments. The agricultural interest will in future be regarded not as comprising only those who hire the land and those who own and let it, but as consisting predominantly of those who actually cultivate it. That is the true tendency revealed by the history of land tenure, that is the real outcome of the rural revolution which is proceeding slowly but irresistibly before our eyes, evident enough if we will but discard the blinkers of habit and prejudice. Whither the nation is being unconsciously guided cannot yet be discerned. It may be to State landlordism, it may even be to State farming, or, on the other hand, it may be to peasant proprietorship or communal farms. All these are possibilities which a generation or two hence may have become historical facts. The land system of this country has—as Mr. Rogers indicated—taken on many aspects during the centuries which have elapsed since our Anglo-Saxon forebears first gave it form. The phase with which we are familiar—the triple alliance of landlord, tenant and labourer—has no more essential elements of permanency than any previous phase. It is peculiar to this country as a national system, and it has, by general consent, placed British Agriculture high in the world's esteem and justified itself by its results. But its position is already shaken. It has been undermined by many who deem themselves its strongest supporters. The nation has been told with emphatic reiteration that the land system has failed, that British Agriculture is decadent, and that nations with other systems have utilised their agricultural resources with much better results. Wounded in the house of its



friends, the British Land System is in no case to withstand the assaults of its enemies. The most powerful weapons in the armoury of attack are the admissions of defeat by its defenders.

In my belief the present land system cannot fairly be accused of failure. The conditions under which Agriculture is carried on in an industrial country are determined by the political and economic circumstances of the nation. It is futile to compare a country which is predominantly agricultural with a country which is predominantly industrial. It may be literally true that Agriculture is still our greatest individual industry, but in some other countries it is greater than all other industries put together, and in those cases Agriculture dominates national policy. To assume that it can ever do so here is only to court eventual disappointment. The land system has endured through the period of fundamental change which marked the transition from an agricultural to an industrial nation, and on the whole it has been justified by its results. The change now impending is the shifting of the centre of gravity in the agricultural industry itself, and the system which will evolve will be that which in the main is most advantageous to the majority of those who live by the land. Meanwhile the best chance of ensuring that the inevitable evolution proceeds on sound lines is that all men of goodwill who are concerned in the future of British Agriculture should recognise the facts and co-operate for the common weal.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE COTTAGE.

THE subject of housing was never far distant from the minds of those members of the Club who represented the agricultural labourers, all of whom were well acquainted with life in a cottage—from the inside. The supply of suitable habitations and the accommodation provided therein had been matters to which their attention had been forcibly directed from early childhood. They knew well where the shoe pinched, for they had worn it. Consequently it was to be expected in any case that the subject of rural cottages would be introduced in discussion, but it happened that during the period with which this chronicle is concerned "housing," both in town and country, was much in the air as part of those roseate visions of reconstruction which a well-intentioned but singularly sanguine Government conjured up for the encouragement of optimists.

In July, 1919, Lord Astor, at that time Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, had an interview with the Agricultural Wages Board and outlined the policy of the Government with regard to rural housing. The Board was concerned by reason of the fact that in fixing minimum rates of wages it had decided that the provision of a cottage by the employer might be reckoned as part payment—in kind—of the wage fixed, and had necessarily to fix the maximum amount which might be deducted from the cash wage in respect thereof. As cottage rents had been practically stereotyped at the pre-war level by the Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restriction) Act, the Board had to fix the amount of the deduction—representing the assumed rent of the cottage—on a pre-war basis, and in fact actually fixed it at 3s. After hearing Lord Astor the Board had

referred the question to their Cottages Committee, and no decision having been arrived at, he came in January, 1920, to the Club—as he expressed it—to put the difficult points. In doing so he gave some very interesting information not only as regards the proposals of the Ministry, but also as regards rural housing generally, much of which was embodied in notes circulated at the meeting.

Lord Astor said :—

In the first place, I think it necessary to have a few fundamental figures before us. The Ministry of Health's estimate of rural requirements was 100,000 houses at once. The total for the country was estimated at half a million. More recent returns show that 500,000 is an under-estimate, so that we may take it that 100,000 is the minimum rural requirement. There are also large numbers of inadequate houses and old cottages which must be replaced.

There is a real and urgent need for new houses. We want to get away from overcrowding, not only in the towns but also in the country. In the near future we must provide reasonable accommodation for all our people. We must also bear in mind the fact that just as we desire to raise the standard of housing in the towns, so it is desirable to raise the standard in the country also. The families of agricultural labourers are on the average 16 per cent. larger than the families of the rest of the population, therefore the bedroom accommodation in rural areas should at least be as good as in the towns and cities. I emphasise this point because it has been said that the standard of housing laid down by the Ministry of Health is too high for the country; but if we are going in for better housing then there is every reason why the higher standard should be applied in the country as well as in the town.

Now these 100,000 are not to be tied cottages, nor are they to be for the use of agricultural labourers only. In our opinion the bulk of these new houses will be in villages and hamlets. That will be a great advantage. It will facilitate the education of the children; it will minister to the gregarious instincts of man; it will permit of the provision of a better water supply and drainage. Moreover, the advent of the bicycle has made it possible for the agricultural labourer to live at some little distance from his work, which may be the case if the houses are built in the manner suggested.

The great difficulty with which we are faced at the outset is the cost of building. Cottages which might cost £350 before the war would now cost at least £700. We are so impressed

at the Ministry of Health by the high cost of building that we are stimulating experiments with new methods of building and rediscovering old methods. We hope that in steel and concrete or pisé-de-terre we shall be able to build more cheaply in many districts. In some areas £100 to £150 may be saved by using these new or old methods in place of brick. Then also the Government have put aside £15,000,000 as a subsidy, and we hope that landowners will come forward and join in providing houses with the inducement of the £150 subsidy for each house built within the next twelve months. We believe there is a nucleus of building labour in some rural districts which will not go to the towns but which could be brought in to help in the emergency. The effect of these high costs must be reflected in the rents of new houses, but before discussing rents I want to ask you to bear in mind a few facts which are apt to be put aside or forgotten. In the first place, a large number of agricultural labourers, say 300,000 to 400,000, do not live in tied houses, and large numbers of these are paying more in semi-suburban districts than the customary rural rent. This brings me to the maximum deduction from wages which may be allowed for a tied house, a matter which I urge upon your immediate consideration. Under the present system, are you going to get equal treatment as between the municipal and landowner builder? Can you say to the former that 7s. is a fair rent, but to the landowner that he can only charge 3s. for a similar adjacent house? That will have to be faced. Or, further, are you going to say to the local authorities that they should charge a different rent for similar houses, according to the occupation of the tenant? Local authorities will have to provide houses for agricultural, industrial, rural, and semi-urban workers. Are they to charge the same rent to each class or are they to vary it according to the occupation of the tenant? They obviously could not limit their rents in semi-urban areas to 3s. weekly; but it is in fact clear that the rent of new houses must be much above the pre-war level. At the present moment agricultural labourers working on the same farm are often receiving different cash wages because they are charged a different rent, and as the deduction or payment for rent differs so the actual cash left to the labourer varies. Again, if more cottages had been available before the war they would in many instances have been let to agricultural labourers at more than 3s. rental. Lastly, if policemen, postmen, and other rural workers, are going to live in these new houses, the older and cheaper cottages will be available for the agricultural workers at a lower rental, although I do not want to limit agricultural labourers to these houses. We may, I think, safely say then that 3s. was neither the universal nor the maximum rent paid by the agricultural labourer before the

war. Further, we cannot draw a strict line of demarcation between the various classes of occupiers of rural cottages when fixing rents for a group of identical houses.

I now want to say a word with reference to uneconomic rents. Let us take, for example, three labourers each paying an uneconomic rent. The first takes a tied house from the employer. In this case the employer is in fact paying a part of his rent. The man gets a larger wage than is apparent from the amount of his weekly earnings. The second labourer gets his house from the landowner. He is in this case subsidised by the landowner. The third labourer is the new type of case where the agricultural labourer rents his cottage from the local authority. If the landowner is able to point to a considerable number of empty municipal cottages in a village near his land which are to be let at an uneconomic rent, either he is able to let his farm at a comparatively high rent without having to put capital into it by building cottages, as he had to build stables, byres, etc., or the farmer is relieved of the necessity based on the cost of building in 1927, when we hope we shall have arrived at the post-war normal conditions, and when costs may have fallen by 30 per cent. Post-war rents must be a great deal higher than pre-war, and it is absolutely necessary to reconsider the figure of 3s. which is at present the maximum rent for a tied cottage. It will be impossible to say to local authorities that they should charge 7s. rent, and at the same time say to the private builder that he may only charge 3s. for an identical cottage in the same area. We must bear in mind the necessity for other houses in rural areas than those for agricultural workers, and we must consider the difficulty which local authorities would experience in attempting to let houses in the same area at different rents. In pre-war days the agricultural labourer would, in many cases, have been prepared to pay a higher rent for a better cottage. While the cost of living has doubled, agricultural wages have more than doubled. On the information available I do not think it would be unfair to say that the initial rent for an agricultural cottage should be at least 7s. to 10s. By this I do not mean that it is desirable that the rent of all the old cottages, many of which are far below our present standard, should go up to the same figure as for good new cottages. In 1927 it will be necessary to arrive at a very substantial increase, and so in all probability there should be an intermediate rise on the proposed initial rents, say in about two or three years' time. The fact is that we must put rural housing on a commercial footing as soon as possible and get away from anything savouring of charity or subsidy. No industry can really exist without being placed upon a sound economic basis, and if the rural exodus and agricul-

tural depression are to be checked we must get on to that basis as soon as possible.

The following were the notes circulated in connection with Lord Astor's address :—

NOTE A.—It is estimated that about 1,000,000 rural houses are occupied by the working classes, of which possibly 60 to 70 per cent., i.e., 600,000 to 700,000, were occupied by persons solely employed in Agriculture, and their families.

*Need for New Cottages.*—In 1913 the Land Enquiry estimated that 1,200,000 rural houses were occupied by working classes, and that an addition of 10 per cent. was needed to meet immediate housing requirements.

The Land Agents' Society regarded both these figures as over-estimates, and considered that 60,000 new cottages would be sufficient for agricultural workers.

Taking the middle of 90,000 between these two estimates and adding a further 10,000 for the increased need due to the cessation of building during the war, 100,000 might be taken as the present minimum requirement.

The Ministry of Health estimated that 500,000 new cottages were needed in the whole country. The population of rural areas is roughly one-fifth that of the whole country, so that on the basis of population the same figure of 100,000 would be indicated.

*Tied Houses.*—One-half to one-third of agricultural labourers inhabit tied houses (Land Enquiry).

So about 200,000 to 300,000 live in tied houses, and about 300,000 to 400,000 live in non-tied houses.

Possibly 75 per cent. of the tied houses are let at 3s. and 25 per cent. at 2s. 6d. or under. This is only a rough guess.

NOTE B.—The following counties had upwards of 30 per cent. of the male inhabitants engaged in Agriculture in 1911 :—

Montgomeryshire.	Anglesey.
Radnorshire.	Norfolk.
Huntingdonshire.	Pembroke.
Cambridgeshire.	Dorsetshire.
Lincolnshire.	Westmorland.
Herefordshire.	Oxfordshire.
Cardiganshire.	Wiltshire.
Suffolk.	Rutlandshire.

The proportion of the population overcrowded in the rural areas of these counties ranged in 1911 from 3 per cent. to 9·3 per cent., and, except in the case of Huntingdon, Westmorland and Rutland, was greater than the proportion overcrowded in the urban areas of the same counties, which varied from 1·9 per cent. to 6·2 per cent.

In all rural areas of England and Wales 61,000 tenements had more than two occupants per room, and half a million people were affected: roughly 6 per cent. of the population of rural areas.

Thirty-six per cent. of the population of rural areas lived over one but not over two per room.

N.B.—The term “overcrowded,” as used for the sake of convenience, refers to families in which more than two persons on an average occupy each room, including all living rooms. It does not allow for differences in the size of rooms or represent any opinion as to what does or does not constitute overcrowding, which must, of course, depend on a variety of other factors, such as the age and sex of the occupants.

NOTE C.—The cost of building, in town and country, is tending to approximate. A brick cottage of the type frequently erected before the war, costing £350, would now cost at least £700. But local factors, such as the accessibility of materials, the nature of the site, etc., as well as the accommodation provided, affect the actual price.

There are some new methods of construction and some very old ones which appear to offer hopes of reduction in cost. *Pisé-de-terre*, cob and chalk may be suitable for some areas. Particulars of cost are not yet available, but it is thought that they should be substantially below brick.

Timber offers some advantages in speed of construction and price.

At the other end of the scale a number of quite new types of construction in concrete and steel, and concrete have been approved by the Ministry of Health. Some of these houses are capable of being produced in large numbers and rapidly erected. In many districts an economy of about £150 may be possible by use of these methods instead of brick.

Under the Housing (Additional Powers) Act just passed a subsidy of £150 will be paid to landowners, farmers or others erecting houses within twelve months for the working classes under certain simple conditions. In the cases of cottages built by local authorities the State is prepared to permit their sale on a basis of two-thirds of the cost of erection, and in calculating rents is prepared to wipe off one-third of the present cost of erection.

The probable cost of a rural cottage with standard accommodation will range from £500 to £750, so that either for the purpose of sale or for calculating the economic rent the cost of erection may be estimated roughly at from £350 to £500.

Assuming that the State bears the loss on one-third of the present cost of building, the economic rent of cottages of which two-thirds of the building cost was—

£350 would be	10/8	per week	(total cost	£525)
£400	12/3	..	(	..
£450	14/-	..	(	..
£500	15/5	..	(	..
				£600)
				£675)
				£750)

taking the rate of interest at 6 per cent. and the usual allowances for repairs, etc., in each case.

NOTE D.—*Wages and Rents*.—The special investigators appointed by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries reported in December, 1918, that the average cash wages of the ordinary agricultural labourer were 16s. 9d. in 1914; this figure nearly agreed with those estimated by the Central Land Association and the Rural League in 1912-13.

The lowest minimum rate fixed by the Agricultural Wages Board is now 36s. 6d., and the highest 42s. 6d., so that the average must be above 37s.

The rise in the cost of living of rural workers was investigated by a special Committee appointed by the Agricultural Wages Board. Their conclusions were based mainly on the comparison of standard budgets and they explain that they cannot be regarded as in any way final. Their view was that in January, 1919, the cost of living had about doubled.

Adopting a similar method the Sumner Committee, appointed to enquire into the cost of living of the working classes generally, adopted a somewhat lower figure for June, 1918.

Without imparting to these figures a scientific accuracy, which they do not claim, it may fairly be assumed that they are very near the truth and that, in fact, the cost of living of rural workers has roughly doubled since the outbreak of war.

During the same period rents have remained practically unchanged. The average shown by the Agricultural Wages Board Committee was 2s. 1d. in 1918, as compared with 1s. 11d. in 1914.

It appears to be difficult to resist the conclusion that the ordinary agricultural labourer, after meeting the increased cost of living, has more than the pre-war margin of cash to spend on rent. This is, of course, not an argument against the increase of wages that has taken place or against a further increase. The intention of the Corn Production Act was to give the labourer an increased standard of comfort. The first addition to his comfort that he needs is better housing; if the rise in the rate of wages has enabled him to pay a higher rent for a better house, it has achieved part of its purpose. It is agreed that the only permanent solution of the agricultural housing problem lies in the payment of an economic rent and in such wages as will make that payment possible.

In the course of the discussion Mr. Acland, as Chairman of



the Cottages Committee of the Wages Board, drew attention to the fact that when the Rent and Mortgage (Restriction) Act was repealed an employer would be free to charge any rent which the worker was willing to pay so long as he paid the full minimum wage in cash. The Order of the Board dealt only with cases where a deduction from the wage was made; where there was no deduction the Order did not apply. They could not yet tell what the standard of rent would be, but he doubted if the number of new cottages would be sufficient to fix the standard. The Wages Board were in agreement with Lord Astor in desiring that the labourer should be able to pay a full economic rent for a free cottage, and as soon as either the completion of new cottages set a higher standard or the rent of the old cottages was forced up they would have to consider the matter with a view to adjusting wages.

Mr. Hobhouse observed that pre-war rents were not economic and the cost of building at the present time would necessitate a high economic rent in future.

Mr. E. Selley (visitor) said there appeared to be two main difficulties, viz., cost of building and ability to pay the rent. He noticed in Note D a reference to average wages. They must be careful in drawing conclusions from that as it might happen that where wages were lowest the cost of building might be highest. He pointed out that overtime earnings and the value of produce sold off allotments should not be taken into account when considering the labourer's ability to pay the rent of a cottage.

Mr. Wadman said that before the war he had built good cottages for £500 a pair. He believed that within the next seven years they would be able to build at less than the figures now given. The law of supply and demand was not dead and he thought that within seven years the majority of things would get to within 25 per cent. of pre-war prices. He did not agree that the present situation was serious, except that they wanted houses promptly. There was no occasion for pessimism. The country was in an extravagant mood, but they must not expect to be in such luxurious conditions as before the war.

Mr. Rea pointed out that there were a number of existing cottages in rural districts capable of improvement at less expense than building new cottages. He asked if the Ministry of Health had considered that matter and whether they were prepared to assist owners who desired to remodel and repair such cottages. With reference to tied houses he thought that where, as in the north, each farm had cottages, as part of its farm equipment it would be difficult to find a sounder system. That would do away with the problem of economic rent, for the provision of a good cottage would really count as part of the cost of production.

To this last remark Mr. Haman Porter rejoined that what he objected to was the tied cottage in the village and not on the farm.

At an early date—in August, 1918—Mr. (now Sir Lawrence) Weaver gave an address on “Rural Housing Policy and Administration,” in which, “speaking freely as a private individual,” he gave a useful summary of the problem as affecting the agricultural labourer, basing his remarks on documents issued by the Departments concerned. The schemes adumbrated at that time subsequently underwent considerable modification, but in the course of the discussion one or two points of general interest emerged. One was the question of providing baths in rural cottages, and views pro and con were expressed. The housewife’s point of view was expressed by Mrs. Bradbury and Miss Seward, who urged that both types of cottage—one with and one without a bath—should be provided, and that at any rate a bath should be available in the village if not in each cottage. I may observe, parenthetically, that in at least one village this solution of the problem has been adopted—at Iwerne Minister, where Mr. James Ismay has provided public baths for the village, which are largely made use of, a moderate charge being made for hot and cold baths respectively. Lord Bledisloe has provided an excellent open-air swimming bath at Lydney, and other instances might be quoted where the desire for cleanliness may be gratified. It is, of course, a survival of a bad old tradition that the desire does not exist; it has been greatly stimu-

lated by the habits formed by the younger men during service in the Army. The "parlour" question also was discussed. On the one hand, it was urged that if it were provided it was not really used, except on rare occasions, and that extra space in the living-room, scullery and pantry was preferable. On the other hand, it was objected that farm workers were as much entitled to the amenities of life as other classes and, as one speaker put it, the parlour could be used for study or for "spooning" by the young folks.

In October, 1919, an address was to have been delivered by Mr. E. R. Forber, Assistant Secretary in the Housing Department of the Ministry of Health, but he was prevented at the last moment by official duties. Under these circumstances the subject was submitted from the Chair for discussion, and Mr. H. R. Aldridge, a well-known authority on the subject, who was fortunately present as a visitor, gave, on the spur of the moment, an interesting address. In the course of his remarks he appealed to all interested in Agriculture to set their faces against the lowering of the standard of building. He advised them to be wary as to wooden buildings. Some figures recently produced as regards wooden buildings were hopelessly absurd. He hoped they would bring common sense to bear on the subject and not depart lightly from the old traditions. There was one material present almost everywhere, that was earth for good bricks. They should as far as possible use brick and stone, as most easily available.

Cottages should have three bedrooms, if not four, and a parlour. They should build houses of which to be proud. The Government was committed to a high standard and they could rest content if the local authorities put up houses of the types shown in the Ministry of Health manual. They must not have a merely standardised cottage; they must make the villages beautiful and not ugly, and that would necessitate planning, grouping cottages round the village green, etc. It meant using the brains of architects. Housing architecture was not an engineering problem, and anything like the bad specimens of arrangement and type

which he had recently seen, for example, at Nieuport, would not do for this country.

Then as regards rents, what were they to be? He was perplexed about the matter. The Government's proposal was that in 1927 the rents should be equal to two-thirds of the cost of building to-day. That rent could not be an economic one, and if they intended to do an economic thing only they would do nothing at all. Rents were fixed to-day according to those prevailing on August 1, 1914. Then 10 per cent. increase was admitted under the Increase of Rents and Mortgage Interest (Restrictions) Act, to come into operation six months after the close of war. A typical worker's cottage in an urban area in, say, Lancashire or Yorkshire was rented at 5s. to 7s. weekly. Now for the new cottages, taking into account the better design and type, the rents should become 7s. 6d. to 10s. 6d., and local authorities say that can be paid by the workers. The Ministry of Health do not challenge the figures, and it can therefore be taken that the new cottages will be rented at about that figure. But there was also the agricultural problem. Rents in rural areas were, say, 1s. 6d., 2s., 2s. 6d., somewhere about £5 per annum standard rent. They would now be asked to pay 5s. or 6s., rates included. Houses in the urban and rural areas cost the same to build, but in the rural areas they were not able to pay the same rent as in the urban areas. Was that fair or logical? That was a matter they must take into account when considering the rural problem.

The Government might say that in 1927 the rent was to be two-thirds of the cost of building to-day, but local authorities would not pledge themselves to that figure. The National Housing and Town Planning Council, representing about 1,000 local authorities, had told the Government they could not pledge themselves to this rent and would ask the Government to reconsider the case when it arose later. Why should the figure be two-thirds? If they applied it, they would be committed to ask the labourers for 15s. for a cottage in 1927. At a meeting in Belgium a few weeks ago he had a talk with a leading French housing expert, who said



*Marten & Sharpley.*

GEORGE DALLAS.

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL CLUB.



that in France they were endeavouring to secure the acceptance of the English standard of rent. By that he meant one day's wage out of six. He (the speaker) had never heard before that this was the English standard, but he was told that this idea was largely held by working men in France. Apply that to the 15s. a week cottage and it would mean that in 1927 the labourer must be earning £4 10s. weekly.

Much of the discussion referred to the proposals of the Government then current and now out-of-date, but one point arose which is of permanent interest, viz., the "cob" cottage well known in the West country.

Lady Margaret Boscawen thought that cob building was a lost art. The Tudor period used cob and in many places walls were still sound after this period of time.

Mr. Lovell said they had a number of cob houses in Somerset, but not built in his time. He never saw them built to-day. In Somerset they had plenty of bricks. He had spoken to the chairman of their council about cob cottages, but the latter's opinion was that they would not add to the beauty of the town. Another point was that with cob cottages the frost was inclined to take off the plaster and the rain seemed to penetrate.

Mr. (now Sir Lawrence) Weaver remarked that there were certainly no traditional cob workers in existence, but cob building could be done, and from what he had heard he did not take such a gloomy view as the last speaker of the soundness of such work.

Mr. Gurd said that for fifty out of his sixty years of life he had lived in a cob cottage and his experience had been different from Mr. Lovell's. He had now lived in one cottage for thirty years and it was dry and good in every respect. If built well a cob cottage made a good house, but it wanted the right earth; provided it had that and good workmanship it was cheaper in some parts of the country than a brick house.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WORKER'S SHARE IN AGRICULTURE.

IN September, 1919, as there happened to be a meeting of the Club at which I had failed to secure anyone to introduce a subject, I filled the gap by reading the following paper. I reprint it in full, not from any excess of pride in authorship—a foible which long usage of the pen has much mitigated—but because it puts one or two points which I still regard as timely :—

We are in the throes, painful and perhaps prolonged, of the birth of a new world. Political, social and economic frontiers and landmarks have been shifted, and we have to redraw the map of the common life of mankind, as the Allies have redrawn the map of Europe. In the welter of change only one factor of civilisation remains stable—human nature. The great war has been the great leveller. The doctrine of the equality of man, since it was propounded by Christ, has been preached—and also perverted—through all the Christian era, but the comradeship of war has hammered into millions of minds the truth that, however much men may differ superficially, or however different may be their places in the ordered life of the community, they are much alike in all the fundamental virtues and vices which go to make up what we term character.

It is from this angle, and in the lurid light of war experience, that the relations of men, and of classes of men, must hereafter be viewed.

One notable result of the war is that, in the national effort to increase food production, the importance of the manual worker has been recognised. The ultimate dependence of Agriculture upon labour has been demonstrated and the worker's share in production has been realised. Farmers at the present time do not stand very well in popular esteem, and the public are inclined to forget the real service which they rendered to the country in its hour of need. There is no doubt that the vast majority of them worked whole-heartedly and unreservedly to increase food production from a sense of patriotism and duty.



But if it is true that the services of farmers are apt to be overlooked, it is equally true that recognition has never been adequately accorded to the labourers, without whose help all effort would have been in vain. The invaluable assistance rendered by women and others who had not previously been accustomed to agricultural service has been appreciated by the public, but the steady hard work of the native sons of the soil, which was the basis of all, is apt to be forgotten. The share of the worker in Agriculture during the war is undeniable, and he became conscious, perhaps for the first time, that he is, equally with the farmer, a producer of the nation's food.

Of course, the very real influence which the agricultural labourer often has in the cultivation of the land and the management of stock is well known, and is by many farmers freely acknowledged. His advice is often sought, and frequently taken, for it is based on close observation and intimate knowledge of the land on which probably he and his forebears have been rooted for centuries.

Kipling's lines on the hereditary worker on the land express a fundamental fact on English country life :—

“ His dead are in the churchyard—thirty generations laid,  
 Their names went down in Domesday Book when Domesday  
 Book was made,  
 And the passion and the piety and prowess of his line,  
 Have seeded, rooted, fruited in some land the Law calls mine.

Not for any beast that burrows, not for any bird that flies,  
 Would I lose his large sound counsel, miss his keen amending  
 eyes.”

The worker's share in Agriculture, therefore, consists not only of the supply of labour and skill in the actual performance of farming operations, but oftentimes includes the contribution of knowledge and experience to the management of the farm. In such cases there is a real co-operation between employer and worker to wrest from nature the utmost of which the land is capable.

It may be said that such co-operation, such mutuality of interest, is rare, or at any rate is becoming less common. Whether this is so or not, it will be generally admitted that this kind of relationship between master and man is desirable, and that all possible means should be adopted to encourage it. If the worker has a real share in agricultural production, he is obviously entitled to a fair share in the results. So far everyone agrees, but the trouble comes in the attempt to define that share, and to determine the method of ascertaining it. In the past, the conception of labour as a mere commodity for purchase and sale has been too crudely expressed. Of course,

services have an exchange value as well as goods, and in the long run the value of them is fixed by supply and demand. Just as it is not possible to sell more hats or boots than there are persons wishing to wear them, just as the number and remuneration of farmers, as of doctors or lawyers or shopkeepers, are decided by the extent of the demand for the services they can supply to the community, so also the number and remuneration of workers in Agriculture must be determined eventually by the amount of work on which they can be profitably employed. In these days it is unfashionable to call attention to anything so antiquated as the law of supply and demand; but it is not the law, but its application, which has been at fault in regard to labour. When it is used to justify the final settlement of the value of man's services by the "higgling of the market," and by no other consideration, it is recognised as inhuman in its application.

The trouble, of course, is that, when you give up the old method of paying as little, whether for goods or services, as you can by any means induce the owner of those goods or services to accept, you are left to find some other principle. This is not easy. Some of our modern teachers find no difficulty in laying down a principle for fixing wages. They say that wages must be such an amount as is necessary to maintain the wage-earner in a reasonable standard of comfort. We should probably all agree to this as an abstract proposition, but it is not a simple matter to express an abstract proposition in pounds, shillings and pence. I confess that I find difficulty in conceiving of wages, or even of salaries, in the abstract. They seem to me necessarily to have a very concrete relation to the resources from whence they are paid. There are, no doubt, exceptions, but, in general terms, it must be true that the labour bill in any industry will have some fairly definite relation to the total proceeds of the industry.

In this elementary consideration of first principles, it may be worth while to recall one or two obvious facts. In the case of farming, the need for both capital and labour is self-evident. For an ordinary farm crop a man must find money for seed, manure, implements, horses and their keep, and also for his own subsistence, for twelve months before he can realise the crop. If he employs more labour than his own he must also advance the whole of the payment for that labour, before he gets any return for it. That is the true function of capital, which, of course, is only another name for accumulated savings. The wage-earner has also to advance his capital—which is his labour—usually for not longer than a week, though sometimes for longer periods—before he gets paid for it. Now, of course, no man will use his savings, i.e., his capital, in trying to grow a

crop unless there is a reasonable prospect, first that it will not be diminished, and secondly, that he will get some return for its use. The general theory that capital will not be invested in an industry unless it will bring a return equal to that which could be obtained, with the same degree of risk, in some other use, is not strictly true of Agriculture. Capital is, and always has been, attracted to Agriculture at a relatively low rate of interest, but there is a point at which no one will be prepared to risk his money.

A similar principle applies to the wage-earner. He will only consent to work on the production of the crop if he is assured of not less remuneration for his services than he can obtain in some other employment, subject again to the fact that some men are willing to work on the land and in the country for lower wages than they will accept in other occupations.

These truisms lead up to the self-evident proposition that both capital and labour must each take a share of the proceeds of the crop, if the crop is to be grown at all. The problem is, on what basis are those shares to be calculated?

Among the questions which will receive the consideration of the Royal Commission on Agriculture will no doubt be the monetary share of the workers in the produce of the industry. At present the material for any calculation is scanty. From the data given in the report of the Wages Board Committee on the financial results of farming,<sup>1</sup> it appears that on twenty-six farms the labour bill during the five years 1913-14 to 1917-18 represented from 17 to 19 per cent. of the total expenditure, and from 15 to 18 per cent. of the total receipts. On twenty-one "home" farms the labour bill represented from 22 to 24 per cent. of the total expenditure. Such figures, however, help us very little to form an opinion as to the basis on which the worker's share should be assessed.

The facts which have to be taken into consideration are not merely statistical. They are mainly human and personal. From the employer's point of view, the first consideration is that the work should be done efficiently and punctually, that it should be done with a sense of responsibility—and with willingness to meet any disturbance of daily routine which weather conditions, or the nature of the work, necessitates. The employer does not want a human machine, he wants an intelligent man who is interested in his work and its results.

Now it is generally true, human nature being what it is, that men will not continually put forth their best efforts, physically and mentally, without a definite incentive. The incentive is not always financial. It often is simple pride in their work,

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<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 76, 1919.

and a feeling of self-respect which will not allow them to do less than their best. Various motives animate different individuals, but it still remains true as a broad generalisation that, year in and year out, a man will do better work if by so doing he earns more money than he will if his remuneration has no relation to the amount or character of his work.

If this is true, it leads to the conclusion that the farm worker will produce more if he has a share in the increased production which results from his extra efforts. In other words, a definite interest in the financial results of the farm will provide an incentive to work and a stake in the success of the undertaking, which will form a binding link of mutual interest between employer and worker.

There is a story of a factory owner who stated that if his workmen liked, they could save him £10,000 a year by less waste and better work, and was somewhat pertinently asked why he did not offer them £5,000 a year to do it.

There are two methods of attaining this object, which have been more or less tested by experience—one known as profit-sharing, and the other as co-partnership.

*Profit-sharing.*—Profit-sharing is an agreement by the employer to pay to the worker a share, fixed in advance, of the profits of the undertaking.

*Co-partnership.*—A definition of co-partnership, drawn up in October, 1911, stated that "In its simplest form, taking the case of a man employed by a great limited liability company, it involves:—

1. That the worker should receive, in addition to the standard wages of the trade, some share in the final profit of the business, or the economy of production.
2. That the worker should accumulate his share of profit, or part thereof, in the capital of the business employing him, thus gaining the ordinary rights and responsibilities of a shareholder."

Anyone who wants to know what has been done in the direction of adopting these two principles in industry generally should refer to the Report on Profit-sharing and Labour Co-partnership in the United Kingdom, issued by the Board of Trade in 1912.<sup>1</sup> According to this Report there were on August 1, 1912, six schemes of profit-sharing in Agriculture, affecting 737 workers. Among the employers responsible for these schemes were Lord Rayleigh, Messrs. Strutt and Parker, and Lady Wantage. This does not take account of agricultural co-operative societies, of which there were at that date 335, mostly in Ireland. Some particulars of a co-partnership farm

<sup>1</sup> Cd. 6496, 1912.

are given in the Report of the Wages Board Committee already mentioned.

It must be admitted that, up to the date of the Board of Trade Report, the history of profit-sharing schemes in agriculture had not been very encouraging, for it was recorded that out of eighteen schemes which had been started, twelve had been abandoned. But as the man who never makes a mistake never makes anything, so failure to succeed is no evidence that success is unattainable. The fact that six schemes had succeeded, or, at any rate, survived—and I believe there are now others—shows that the problem is not insoluble.

I admit that if we accept the view that there are not now, and never again will be, any profits in farming, a discussion of methods of sharing them is waste of time. But I submit that, if only for the sake of argument, we must assume that farming in this country will be carried on, and as no industry can long be carried on without profits, the discussion is not quite futile. If there is any truth in the remarks which I made at the outset, we shall not get much help in the times in which we now live by quoting precedents from the Victorian era. The point to be established is that it is desirable that the workers should have a definite share in the financial results of their labour, and that the inducement to them to use their best efforts should not be merely the fear of losing their job. If this principle is right in itself, and if its adoption in Agriculture will strengthen the bonds which should unite those engaged in the same calling, emphasise their common interest, and increase the production of the land, I cannot believe that the wit of man is incapable of devising a practical means of applying it.

At the beginning of these remarks I referred to the fact that it is not infrequent for a farmer to take counsel with the more experienced of his labourers, in regard to the operations of the farm, and thus to invite him in a limited degree to take a share in the management. A tendency is also becoming prominent among the workers in other industries to claim a definite share in the control of the business in which they are employed. This is quite distinct from a claim to a share in the management, which may be given under a profit-sharing or co-partnership scheme, in respect of capital invested in the undertaking. The claim is made by wage-earners as wage-earners.

It has been expressed by a prominent Labour leader in these words: "We invest our lives in these mines, which is of greater importance than the capital of the employer, and to that extent have a right to say as to what the conditions shall be, not merely the working conditions, but we are entitled to have some information on the commercial side of the thing also." Of course, it may be said that farming is not mining, and that the condi-

tions of employment and the organisation of the industry are totally dissimilar. No doubt this is true, but the following quotation from a letter in *The Times*, written by Lord Robert Cecil in February last, suggests that the same idea which miners entertain is not entirely unknown in Agriculture. Lord Robert wrote: "At the late election in one of the villages in my constituency there was apparent a strong anti-employer feeling, and I was told that it was due to the fact that the local farmer—an incompetent man—declined to listen to the advice of the men employed by him, who had far greater experience in Agriculture than he had. They argued that he was not only ruining himself, which was his affair, but in so doing he was ruining, or likely to ruin, them also, and that it was intolerable that they should not even be consulted before such follies were perpetrated." There may, of course, be another side to such a story. The conservative instinct—I am not talking of politics—is deeply rooted in every one connected with the land, and in none more so than the agricultural labourer. I have no doubt that any progressive farmer who wished to introduce new practices, or to make experiments, would often do so in face of general criticism, if not hostility, from his men. I think also, that a farm, like a ship, can only be run by one captain, and that any attempt to farm by a committee would be the shortest road to ruin. The sort of feeling to which Lord Robert Cecil referred could only be aroused by a degree of tactlessness on the part of an employer in dealing with his men which we may hope is extremely rare. But the desire of workers in any capacity to be taken into confidence with regard to the business in which their lives are bound up, and on which their livelihood depends, is a natural one, and it seems to me that it is wisdom on the part of employers to recognise, and, so far as may be practicable, to meet it.

The sum of the whole matter is, that the worker's share in Agriculture, and his position in the industry, will be determined in the long run by the general spirit of the relationship which exists between him and his employer, rather than by the precise definition of the terms of the relationship. Mutual respect, and confidence and consideration, cannot be defined, but it is in the cultivation of these qualities that the best outlook for the future lies, and where they exist there will be real co-operation for the promotion of the best interests of all engaged in the cultivation of the land.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SONS OF TOIL.

He made no boast, grudged no old scar,  
Sought nothing that he had not got,  
But took his place affronting war,  
The slow, the patient child of Earth,  
By them on whom a happier star  
Shone to forecast a happier birth :  
All brothers now !

—*Maurice Hewlett.*

THE Agricultural Club was established at a time when the fate of the nation was in the balance, when we were watching with poignant interest and anxious minds the grim struggle which our sons and brothers were waging on our behalf across the narrow sea ; when only their steadfastness and self-sacrifice stood between us and utter ruin. Those of us who were debarred from sharing their dangers and had shamefacedly to try, according to our opportunities, to do what in us lay to help at home, were overwhelmed with gratitude and sympathy towards those who bore for us the burden and risks of the war. A wave of strong emotion swept over the people, and we made earnest vows that those who saved us, and survived, should be repaid in full so far as payment was possible for such services as theirs.

The country-side, as of old, was foremost in England's cause. Some of those who watched "the men who march away" leave the villages for the Great War may have known other times when the call to arms had drained the rural districts of their youth, for always throughout history, when fighting for the country was to be done, the men from the land were the first to go. With what high courage they went ; with what heavy hearts but high resolve those who watched them bade them farewell. There is no village

in which there is not some token of remembrance of those who lie in corners of foreign fields "that are for ever England." There are numberless cottages—and mansions too—where remembrance will endure; but of the nation's remembrance, of the people's vows, what remains?

"If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields."

It was under the influence of the emotion of profound gratitude to the men of the villages that the earlier discussions at the Club took place. There was very little direct allusion, but there was a tangible atmosphere of common sentiment.

Once or twice the sense of obligation found expression. "The men now fighting would expect a very different life on their return, and it was only natural they should," declared a well-known landowner at one of the early meetings. "The men would come back from the front with more independent views," said a farmer, and another remarked that they would have "a broader outlook." Still another farmer observed that "something must be done to make the young men contented." "The boys now fighting would never be content to come back to their former life," declared Mr. George Edwards.

There was tacit agreement that the lot of the agricultural labourer before the war had been unduly hard, and not a dissentient voice was raised from any quarter to the declaration repeatedly made that never again must he be allowed to sink to the same level. Confident belief in the sincerity of these declarations was expressed on behalf of the workers, and "the better times coming" cheered many a village home. The rural worker had no faith in Governments or even in Parliament. It was ingrained in his mind that they are always against him, and even if they offer him gifts he is still distrustful. But at long last he became almost convinced that the Government wished him well, and that Parliament intended to help him, when the legal minimum wage was enacted and he found that it was not a mere scrap



of paper, but a tangible fact which was embodied in actual cash.

It is not surprising that the agricultural labourer should be mistrustful of the powers that be. He may not be well-read in history, but he has, deeply rooted in his mind, traditions handed down from one generation to another which are infinitely more powerful in their effects than written books. The enclosure of commons regarded from the point of view of those who were dispossessed of immemorial privileges to enrich landlords and farmers; the iniquities of the old Poor Law, under which the working man was treated on the same principle as a horse, to be allowed just enough to enable him to live and work; the cruel suppression, by the straining of a harsh law, of his early attempts at combination to improve his position; the equally brutal exercise of their superior economic strength by farmers to crush the movement started by Arch—these are the facts, coloured and distorted by those who were the sufferers, which make up history as known to the rural worker. If the more intelligent agricultural labourer, doubtful of traditional history, turned to the books, he found as a rule his worst impressions confirmed by historians, who in too many cases allow their indignation to overpower their impartiality. It is impressed on him not only that his forebears were vilely treated, but that they were specially singled out for bad treatment. Evils which were universal are described as if they were peculiar to the country-side; landowners and farmers, who acted in fact no worse, and frequently better, than their contemporaries in trade or industry, are held up to obloquy as sinners above their fellows; designs, such as the famous Speenhamland system, honestly, though fatuously, well-intended, are branded as instruments of deliberate oppression; all the sociological and economic nostrums with which the nation at large was afflicted are described as if they were ingeniously devised in a spirit of hostility to the rural worker. No wonder if thus instructed the agricultural labourer cherishes his age-long grievances and cultivates a bitter distrust of authority.

And however fairly history be read it remains true that during the last century, in which national wealth increased so enormously and British Agriculture, in spite of ups and downs, made great progress the agricultural labourer did not fairly share in the well-being of the community. Indeed in some respects his position was worsened.

“The peasant, under the old system, had a definite independent place in the community. He commanded respect for his skill, judgment and experience in his own industries. He was not cut off by any distinctions in ideas, tastes, or habits from the classes above. On the contrary, each grade shaded almost imperceptibly into the next. Today the intermediate classes have disappeared. Instead of the ascending scale of peasant-labourer, the blacksmith, carpenter, wheelwright, and carrier, the small holder, the village shopkeeper, the small farmer, the larger farmer, the yeoman occupying his own land, and the squire, there are in many villages only two categories—employers and employed. The gulf is wide enough. It has been broadened by the progress of a civilisation which is more and more based on the possession of money. All the employing classes have moved on and upwards in wealth, in education, in tastes, in habits, in their standard of living. Except in education, the employed alone have stood comparatively still. The sense of social inferiority which is thus fostered has impressed the labourer with the feeling that he is not regarded as a member of the community but only as its helot. It is from this point of view that he resents, in a half-humorous, half-sullen fashion, the kindly efforts of well-meaning patrons to do him good, the restrictions imposed on his occupation of his cottage, as well as the paraphernalia of policemen, sanitary and medical inspectors, school-attendance officers, who dragoon and shepherd him into being sober, law-abiding, clean, healthy, and considerate of the future of his children. To his mind it is all part of the treatment meted out to a being who is regarded as belonging to an inferior race.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus wrote, in 1912, an historian who possesses both

<sup>1</sup> *English Farming, Past and Present.* Rowland E. Prothero.

knowledge and understanding. Five years later, as President of the Board of Agriculture, he introduced and piloted with marked success the Bill containing a provision which for the first time created a belief in the minds of rural workers that the Government of the country really meant to benefit them. Unhappily that belief has since been dispelled and the nascent faith in the goodwill of Parliament has died away. It was sorely tried in other ways. The well-meant but unfortunate appeal during the war to the farm workers retained on the land, to work an extra hour a day, without any reference to pay for it, still rankles. Farmers and labourers were at that time doing their utmost to increase production under very difficult circumstances. The farmers deservedly got much credit, but they were also making money; the workers got very little credit and still less cash for their extra exertions. Increased production could not fail to benefit the seller of the product as well as the nation, but it brought little or no advantage to those who actually produced it. The disappointment at the meagre and tardy provision of land which had been so lavishly promised to the men who returned was great and grievous. The withdrawal, after only three years' trial, of the legal minimum wage was the culmination of a series of circumstances for which the Government was but partly responsible but for which it was wholly blamed.

If the agricultural labourers have lost faith they have not lost hope. Though once more disillusioned they have at last realised that the future lies in their hands. To quote from Lord Ernle's book once more:—

“The centre of power has shifted. It is no longer landowners or tenant-farmers, either alone or in combination, who hold the key to the rural situation. It is the agricultural labourer.”

The grip of essential facts and the insight into the heart of the position shown by this observation, is more evident now than when it was written. Since then farm labour has become organised and has begun to realise its power. It has found able and astute leaders. The agricultural labourer not only “holds the key,” but he will, in due time, use it,

Many of the observations made in the course of discussion at the Club were illuminating of the mental attitude of the speakers. I quote a few:—

*By Agricultural Labourers.*

“Thousands of labourers are saying they have no part or lot in the country.”

“There was an old saying that ‘strong in the arm and thick in the head’ suited the employer best. There had been no encouragement for the labourer to improve himself, morally or intellectually, in the past.”

“We have to consider is it in the best interests of the nation to have a healthy, virile population, permanently established on the soil, and, if so, to try and discover the best means to secure that end.”

“I suppose we shall all agree that amongst the many and divergent causes which brought about rural depopulation a primary cause was the deprivation of the people of their hold upon the land, especially under the Enclosure Acts.”

“The enclosing of the commons was one of the first things which began the destruction of the village.”

“Why do you find so many strong, healthy people in the villages? It was purely a question of the survival of the fittest. Whole families of the weaker ones died out. I have seen many put in the grave years before they should have been; mothers who, for the sake of their children, have denied themselves of the food and clothes they so sorely needed, and have died in consequence. If the true epitaph had been put on the gravestone, it would have read—‘Starved herself that her children might live.’”

“Arch’s movement came too soon, as the labourers in 1872 were a different class than they were to-day. Although he, to some extent, failed, he prepared the soil for better days. The labourers then felt there was collusion between the landlords and the farmers to prevent the spirit of independence growing. The clergy and nonconformist parsons took sides against the labourers, and this was one of the causes of the apathy and hostile spirit manifested towards religion to-day.”

“ If rural life was to be made what it ought to be there should be no divorce between religion and labour. If religion were made more practical there would be an end of slavery, discontent and low morals.”

“ If the labourer was asked what he wanted most he would say a cottage he could not be turned out of.”

“ I have no confidence in Parish Councils and still less in County Councils. I am a member of a Parish Council and they have done nothing except get a mid-day post.”

“ My experience of Parish Councils is that the man who speaks out often gets turned out of the village.”

“ Labour representatives on Parish Councils ceased to be effective because of victimisation.”

“ If any Parish Council wants to get allotments they have to pay double the rent the farmer paid before.”

“ In Agriculture the wages of the workers should be the first charge, farmers' profits the second, and the claim of the landowner third. At present rent came first, farmers said they must be second, and the worker got left.”

“ My experience of landlords is that they hardly ever visit their farms, except to see what sort of a partridge crop there is, or to take the rent.”

“ A man has to be born on the land to be successful in farming.”

“ I have been on the land over fifty years and I hope yet to live to see decent cottages and many of them the property of the cottagers and their pride, upon which they could spend their energies of improvement and useful adaptation, without those energies being in the end for the benefit of the landlord.”

“ The main difference between mining and Agriculture is that of risk. The human needs of both classes of worker are the same and their intellectual capacity and aspirations just as high, so no distinction should be drawn between one section of workers and another.”

“ Farmers still continued their grumbling habits. I live in hopes of seeing them move nearer Thanksgiving Street.”

“ At elections we were told, which was true, that we were wandering in the wilderness ; some pointed in one direction

telling us the Promised Land was that way, others in an opposite direction. We blindly followed and did not realise that the Promised Land for which we were looking was the very land on which we stood."

*By Workers' Representatives.*

"To the charge that the policy of the Labour Party is one of 'all take and no give,' I reply that Labour demands the removal of obstacles. To-day there was privilege and monopoly for the few. Labour was prepared to give its services, but it had nothing else to offer."

"The Labour Party exists to remove the embargoes which past and present-day laws have imposed, and which prevent evolution—to get opportunities of living a free life.

"This country is the centre of the British Empire, and we ought to keep the good men on the land."

"In Scotland there is the same difficulty as in England in keeping good men on the land. The reason is that they have no place in the community. They want more outlet for their activities."

"My mind goes back to an election when I heard a farmer candidate say the agricultural labourer was the most skilled in the world."

"If farmers had good cattle they took care of them; they should give as much attention to men as to cattle."

"Many men would not come back from the war; many would come back maimed and broken. The women would have to fend for themselves."

"The land is not the place for a married woman."

"I have strong views about the employment of women on the land, but they are buried for the time of the war."

"Women should be independent; their greatest tyrant was often the agricultural labourer."

"Having seen how hard my mother worked, and how in the evening the men often came home very irritable, I realised that the man I married should not be an agricultural labourer."

"Landlords should seek information direct from the labourers."

“ The influence of the parson is often for good, but sometimes he tries to domineer over every one. The schoolmaster and parson are often in conflict. We are getting a better and more manly type of parson to-day.”

“ The Army brought the best out of the men and we do not want to see them go back into the old rut.”

“ Some people cling to the idea that anything will do for the labourer, but the labourer in the future would look on things differently.”

“ Socialists had always neglected the rural problem.”

“ An honest market is the one vital need of the small grower.”

“ The agitation in the Labour world is in the direction of control by the industry concerned. The labourer wants to feel that he has some control.”

“ First give the labourer a decent wage, a good cottage, and the chance of a brighter social life.”

“ Trade Unionism would bring people together and supplant suspicion by the fact of a common interest and purpose, and I regret that farmers and landlords had generally been opposed to labourers joining a Union. Another help towards attaining a broader outlook is sport, and Trade Unionism is responsible for establishing conditions which afford the labourer an opportunity of taking part in sports. The half-day holiday enables the labourer to come in contact with others, and is a helpful agency in producing a better type of worker.”

“ In Scotland they were told £3 18s. 6d. was a normal week's wage for an agricultural labourer, and the farmers were ready to pay it. Did that mean that in England they are not such good farmers? Something was wrong with their business capacity if they were not able to pay equal wages.”

*By Farmers.*

“ It is stated that the wages of agricultural labourers before the war were totally inadequate in comparison with other workers. I admit this appears so on paper, but few people are really aware of the very many advantages that these men enjoyed, not possible in town life.”

“Some farmers failed to realise that their men were human beings and had rights as well as duties. Employers should take a greater interest in the way the men did their work. I always advocate the encouragement of intellectual pursuits to interest the men after their work.”

“Distrust on the farmer’s part would lead to dishonesty in the men.”

“The housing question will have much to do with the future of village life, and it would be a good thing for the agricultural labourer to become the owner of his cottage.”

“In my district tied cottages are a safeguard to the worker. Each farm was equipped with cottages just as it was equipped with buildings, and when the men were engaged they went into the house. If they left they knew they could walk into a cottage on the farm they went to. There is no sounder system.”

“I have no fear for the farming community if they get a fair field unhampered by restrictions and control. The control exercised by the Government was a marvellous example of how not to do things. No profession needed more common sense than farming.”

“Intensive cultivation is not a poor man’s enterprise.”

“Private enterprise has brought British Agriculture to the position it holds to-day.”

“In the past I thought tenancy was best, but now I think the occupying owner is in the best position.”

“Tenancy on a good estate is the best system.”

“There was said to be a great deal of agitation on the part of the agricultural labourer to secure more money and shorter hours, but it was only the work of a small number of agitators. I have never heard of anything of that nature in any district or on my farms.”

“If farm accounts had been kept it would have been good for the farmers, but bad for the consumers, for in that case milk would never have been sold at such a low price in pre-war days.”

“There was no better system than that one class should own and another should farm.”

“The revolution in wages and conditions of employment



had been made easy by the Agricultural Wages Board. They had got over their difficulties in friendly discussion, very different from what might have been the case."

*By Landowners.*

"The agricultural structure can only be sound if the foundation is sound. The foundation is the agricultural worker. The agricultural labourer must have a sound economic position if the agricultural prosperity of the country is to be developed."

"In the past agricultural discussion had taken place in water-tight compartments. The landowners, the farmers and the workers, who were a silent but thoughtful race, each held their views, but had not heard those of others."

"Land agents had been brought into being because the landlords did not know their job."

"The farmer must look to the organisation of his labour, and the industry must also be organised."

"The extra margin of profit to pay the minimum wage was to be found by co-operation. There must be a certain number of middlemen, but to-day we are carrying on our backs far too many; when they are eliminated there will be scope to find good wages."

"I accept the order of the worker first, farmer second, and landlord third."

"Farmers must be willing to have the costs of production gone into, and must keep accounts that could be investigated."

"A previous speaker's idea of the millennium seemed to be that the farmer and the labourer should divide the profits, and the devil, or the Government, should take the land. Land has been offered to tenants on terms little higher than those suggested, but those extremely stupid people had said they would rather be under a good landlord."

"Production is more important than the system of tenure."

"Farmers and landowners must face the fact that the standard of remuneration of labour will be higher in the future than in the past. They would have to look largely

to intensive methods of cultivation and to securing better varieties of stock and farm crops."

"Dairying is one of the corner-stones of the agricultural industry and should be stimulated in the interests of the future well-being of the country."

"Some one had said there was no hope for British farming until the present farmers were dead, but there was still some hope."

"The problem of food supplies was an international one, and to attempt to place the agricultural situation in England in a water-tight compartment would be to get up against political difficulties not easy to overcome."

"A fundamental error had been made during the last hundred years in allowing the labourer to be divorced from a direct interest in the land."

This collection of "sayings"—wise and otherwise—has been made haphazard as a sample of the sort of things which men said at the meetings of the Club. In every case it must be remembered that the speaker spoke only for himself. No one spoke in "a representative capacity" and the opinions expressed by one worker, or farmer or landowner might not be shared by any other. I have classified the sayings in groups merely to indicate the point of view of the speaker, but many of them might have been made by any other member of the Club. I remember on one occasion, after two speeches by prominent Labour men, a landlord following them, who exclaimed that it would "do some of the revolutionaries good" to have heard them. Yet a large number of landowners and farmers would regard those two speakers as dangerous revolutionaries.

Indeed, as I have previously remarked, frank utterance of honest views was expected and obtained. It was well understood that most of the members were associated, mainly in responsible positions, with others for the advocacy and furtherance of certain lines of public action, and it was equally understood that such association is only possible if individuals are willing to waive their personal opinions on many points for the sake of combination for larger ends.

Those are the necessary conditions of public controversy, and they are also the essential conditions of national progress. A free constitution can only work efficiently—human nature being what it is—under a party system. All members of a free community—except a few fanatical theorists—desire the general good of the community, though they may differ widely as to the means of attaining that object. To assume that the welfare of the nation is a monopoly of any one group of men, or that it provides in any sense a basis of political action, is fallacious. It is the principle common to all parties, however widely they may differ in its application.

This applies to the agricultural community, and the discussions at the agricultural Club illustrated it. The prosperity of British Agriculture was the aim of all. The proposals to achieve this end made by some appeared wholly unreasonable or impracticable to others, but they were put forward in good faith as means of attaining the goal of common aspiration.

It will be noticed that I have distinguished the sayings of agricultural labourers from those of workers' representatives, but the distinction is somewhat arbitrary. Among the former I have included those who have spent their lives, or the greater part of them, as actual farm workers, some of them being still employed as wage-earners, while others, after long years as wage-earners, have now become small holders working only occasionally for wages. The workers' representatives include those who were not and had not been, since their early youth at any rate, actually employed in Agriculture. Most—indeed I believe all—of them were born and bred on the land, the sons of agricultural labourers, and had a personal knowledge of country life and, generally speaking, had acquired a knowledge of the economic side of Agriculture quite as great, and often greater, than that of the majority of those actually engaged in it.

Nothing perhaps has done more to prejudice farmers in the opinion of the public than the objections raised by some of them to discussing questions of wages and conditions of employment with the chosen representatives of the men on the ground that they were not personally engaged in the

industry. Unwise attempts were made to impose such a qualification on the workers' members of the Wages Board and the District Wages Committees. The right of any body of men to choose their own representatives is one which in all other relations of life is never challenged. If they consider it to their advantage to obtain the services of others—e.g., lawyers—to negotiate on their behalf, or if they have, as an organisation, officials to whom they entrust the conduct of their affairs, is a matter entirely for their decision. In the case of Agriculture, farmers who attempted to prevent the men from exercising a free choice of representatives could not escape the suspicion—however unjust it might be—of wishing to secure an unfair advantage. Agricultural labourers are an inarticulate class, whose circumstances of life debar them, as a rule, from that constant intercourse with their fellow-men which tends to promote readiness of speech and quick-wittedness in discussion. Added to this was the obvious difficulty of securing the regular attendance at meetings of men engaged in daily work who—unlike the farmers—had to obtain permission to leave their work.

It need hardly be said that this attitude received no support or encouragement from the leaders of the farmers or from those who were members of the Club. Whatever their private opinions may have been, they fully recognised the right of the chosen representatives of the workers to represent them. The discussions at the Club helped very much to dispel any impression—if such had existed—that those who spoke on behalf of the workers had no knowledge of Agriculture. Those who were members of the Wages Board were well aware that on the subjects there considered the workers' representatives were thoroughly well equipped for arguing their case, but the discussions at the Club proved that they had also a wide acquaintance not only with the economic, but also in a large degree with the practical side of the business of farming.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### RURAL PSYCHOLOGY.

POPE, at the present time, is out of favour as a poet, but his polished couplets are eminently quotable and many of his platitudes embody permanent truths. His declaration that "the proper study of mankind is man," expresses a sentiment which is very generally accepted and practised. Whether the study of human nature is "proper" or not, it is at any rate engrossing, and an opportunity for its exercise was afforded in the Chair of the Agricultural Club. It cannot be claimed that the members of the Club were what statisticians term "a random sample" of the agricultural community. By the nature of the qualification each individual had attained membership by some process of selection. In one way or another he had secured the confidence of his fellows, which after all is the highest distinction to which a man can aspire. But if it was strictly speaking a "selected sample," it was nevertheless very representative not only of rural England in the topographical sense, but of the various elements which go to make up the community of the country-side. The habit of introspection is not a product of the open-air; it is usually engendered in the study or the cloister. It cannot be said that any of those who introduced subjects or took part in discussion consciously indulged in psychological speculations. Perhaps Mr. Castell Wrey's paper on "Suspicion" most nearly approached a deliberate attempt to describe the mentality of the country-side, and there were incidental allusions at various times which were illuminating. Mr. Wrey described the three classes of the Agricultural community and suggested that "suspicion was one of the chief causes for the uneconomical position in which Agriculture stands to-day"—i.e., in September, 1919:—

The first class named, the landlord, will, I am sure, be looked on with esteem and affection by all sections of my audience ; as a very general rule he is first and foremost a sportsman ; he heads the local list for subscription, whether for a joyous cause or a sad one ; his care and thought for those living on his property is more often measured by the shallowness of his pocket than the depth of his good nature. But—and there is always a but, unfortunately—is he by training and education always fitted to hold the important position he occupies ? Often as owner of many thousands of acres of agricultural land he has only a very superficial knowledge of the intricacies of the business of Agriculture, and often this is gained merely from hunting and shooting. The individual is not to blame, I am sure ; it is the system of his upbringing to which blame must be attached. Our thanks are due to him and his forebears and sons for filling with honour and distinction posts of responsibility in the Navy and Army, and he and his have brought our forces by their manly leading to the proud position our “ Old Contemptibles ” held in 1914 in France and Flanders.

To my mind the agricultural landowner stands in the position occupied by the managing director in any other business. There is, however, this vast difference between them : the very large majority of landowners, though they may have some knowledge of the business of farming, are not as fully qualified as the managing director of any other big business would be, a man probably who has worked up from the ranks of the business he is directing, and who has acquired an intimate knowledge of the details and organisation of that business. Without this inside knowledge of Agriculture, so necessary to the landowner, suspicion is bound to exist in his own mind of himself and possibly of those under him. If a man in any business is not up to the mark in all details of his profession, he is bound to distrust himself, and to wonder if he shall do this or that. Shall he sell now or hold on ? Shall he buy more or less of this or that this year ? In many cases the landowner has his agent to consult and get advice from, but it must be remembered that the final word and order lie with the landowner, and if he is not competent to give it, then suspicion of his agent may occur if, for example, he hears that his neighbours have secured a better price for their wool, or have let a farm at a higher rent than he is receiving. Many other causes of distrust might similarly occur.

I will now deal with the second factor in Agriculture, the tenant-farmer. Here we have a type of man with hospitality, kindness and good nature written largely all over him ; the most conservative in ideas and action of any class in Britain ; physically, the ideal man from the life he leads, exposed as he

But this fine race of men are wrapped up in suspicion, and it is hard to blame them for it. To-day, more than at any time in the memory of any of us here to-night, is the awful suspicion in the tenant-farmer's mind that any post may bring him notice that his farm is going to be sold, as the landowner is selling the outlying portions of his estate. The last thing I should wish to do is to promote a discussion on security of tenure or other political problems, but the distrust natural to the thought by a tenant-farmer that his home may be broken up and pass into other hands is bound to be conducive to a man not applying all his business capabilities, and the cash resources at his command, to further the business of Agriculture.

There are other factors in the life of a tenant-farmer to make him suspicious ; let me take only one as an example—a farmer with an early sample of corn to sell to a local corn-dealer. The farmer has, perhaps, been working all the week at harvesting and threshing, with possibly a late night or two with a calving heifer or a sick horse, and is a genuinely tired man at the end of his day. On the Saturday he takes his sample of corn to market and meets there the dealer to whom he wishes to sell it. This dealer was at Mark Lane on Monday, another market on Tuesday, somewhere else on Wednesday, and so on. The dealer knows the weather conditions that have prevailed in all the districts where he attends markets : that wheat is good in this district and oats and barley in that. The dealer's business is to average his bulk of samples to try and make a profit at Mark Lane the following Monday. The farmer can attend none of these distant markets and is too tired to study the corn-trade papers at the end of his day. Is it to be wondered at that the farmer should distrust his power of selling at the best price, and may possibly have some suspicion of the dealer, as to whether he has paid him the top price for the sample he has submitted? I frankly own that I have been in that same position myself, although I had better chances than the average farmer of studying the markets. And so we find in this example that wretched bugbear of suspicion hindering the fullest development of the business of Agriculture.

The third class necessary to this huge industry is the agricultural worker, until quite recent years, unfortunately, almost illiterate and uneducated. What chance have the older labourers had in the past? They have had practically no chance of education and very often not enough food when youngsters to stimulate growth of brain. Is it to be wondered at that suspicion enters largely into their life? Only a few years ago the father of a family received 12s. and 15s. for a week's work.

Is it surprising that if his small boy could earn an odd shilling he took him away from school and was glad to have the shilling to help pay the housekeeping bill? I do not think that we can blame those men if they are suspicious of everything, and more than suspicious of the profits they think the farmer is making out of their labour, and of which they think they do not get a fair share.

The ensuing discussion was chiefly concerned with the remainder of Mr. Wrey's paper, which dealt with education and has already been referred to. One or two speakers, however, alluded to the subject of suspicion—Mr. W. R. Smith observing that, although it was not confined to Agriculture, it was perhaps more developed there than elsewhere. He attributed this largely to the isolation of the work. Mr. George Dallas remarked that the Agricultural Wages Board had been a great factor in breaking down the barriers of suspicion. Mr. R. V. Lennard pointed out that suspicion existed not only between different classes but between members of the same class. Mr. T. Henderson, a visitor from Scotland, had found other people just as suspicious as farm workers.

It is easy to be beguiled by generalities, and it is doubtful whether any particular trait can be said to be peculiar to country folk. Certain idiosyncrasies or habits of mind may no doubt be fostered by environment, but they arise rather from conditions of life than from any inherent differentiation. Indeed, there are stronger influences affecting mentality, such as heredity and tradition, than any induced by the circumstances of avocation. As I have already indicated, the main impression an observer would have obtained from regular attendance at the Club meetings was one of the uniformity rather than of the divergence of mental outlook. The point of view from which every subject was regarded was distinctively English. The innate love of personal liberty, the tolerance born of centuries of free discussion, the acceptance of the right of the majority to rule, the insistence on orderliness—these were always evident and were implicit in the utterances of every one, even if the thoughts expressed appeared superficially to conflict with one or other of these fundamental concepts. In brief



the dominant note was British common sense—which is largely the sum of these ingrained ideas.

In the Life of the late Lord Salisbury, who would probably be accepted as a notable exponent of British common sense, is a passage from one of his letters, in which he protests against the idea that there is any particular difference in the vices and virtues of different classes of the community, though they may find expression in different ways. The general tenour of his protest was very much that whimsically expressed by W. S. Gilbert :—

“Hearts just as pure and fair  
May beat in Belgrave Square  
As in the lowly air  
Of Seven Dials.”

or, as Kipling expresses it :—

“The colonel’s lady an’ Judy O’Grady  
Are sisters under their skins.”

Perhaps the chief characteristic of agricultural labourers is reserve or reticence. It is typical of all Englishmen and largely accounts for the misunderstanding of the English which is so prevalent among more emotional and demonstrative peoples. In the man or woman born and bred on the land it is aggravated by a lack of the facility of self-expression and the limitations of a vocabulary restricted to the needs of everyday life. But it is also largely the product of generations of economic dependence and social subservience. It is the natural defence against intrusive observation and oversight. All the details of their lives are so blatantly exposed that they can conceal nothing but their thoughts, and these they guard as private possessions. A more amiable trait, on which one or two of the rural workers at the Club repeatedly insisted, is their local patriotism and their love of the land. Affection for the native village is almost stronger than attachment to the cottage home—a survival possibly of the communal or manorial life of the Middle Ages, or even of the tribal instinct.

In this country more perhaps than in any other the term farmer has an extraordinarily wide range. It is indeed not

easy to frame a water-tight definition of the term. Strictly speaking, a farmer is a person who pays rent as an occupier of agricultural land—a definition which would include the small holder and exclude the yeoman. Parenthetically, it may be observed that the term “yeoman-farmer,” which has come into common use in recent years, is either tautological or contradictory. A yeoman is a man occupying a farm which is his own property, who is neither an owner nor an occupier of other farms. But even the renting and occupation of agricultural land does not necessarily make a member of the farming class, for in this country thousands of farms are occupied by persons as subsidiary to their primary occupation. This indeed introduces an element of complication into British Agriculture, the significance of which is not fully recognised. The desire by successful commercial men to become landed proprietors and the replacement of the old families by these immigrants constitute a movement which has gone on continuously since the sixteenth century. Apart from sentiment and a natural sympathy with those who have been compelled by hard fortune to leave their ancestral homes, the movement has been beneficial to the progress of Agriculture. It has brought an enormous amount of outside capital into the development and equipment of the land, and it has been in the long run advantageous to the occupiers of land on the estates which have thus changed hands. The demand for farms by those who wish to occupy them for pleasure or recreation or as a subsidiary source of income affects very seriously the position of tenant-farmers dependent solely on the occupation of land for their livelihood. Competition of this nature for farms will increase, and it forms an important factor not only in fixing rents and terms of tenancy, but also in determining the average standard of profit on a given area of land.

For practical purposes a strict definition of farmers is not necessary. As the schoolboy said of the elephant, he could not describe it but he knew one when he saw it. The typical farmer usually comes of farming stock, and derives not only his income but all his interests in life from the land. As a

rule the land is to him what the sea is to the sailor. However hardly it may treat him and however he may suffer from it, he cannot leave it, or if he does he is unhappy. He is apt to scorn those who take farms without previous experience, or indeed unless they have been born and bred on the land. It is a fixed idea with him that such interlopers are bound to fail. The facts lend no support to this idea. Hundreds of men who have been trained in other callings take farms and succeed in them. One of the largest and most flourishing farmers in the country was educated as a medical man, and there are innumerable instances of men, relinquishing other occupations, taking farms from reasons of health and becoming successful. Some fail, no doubt, but so also do some hereditary farmers. At one of the Club meetings Lord Bledisloe mentioned that one of the most successful farmers on his estate had been an engine-driver, who left the railway service in middle life to become a farm labourer and subsequently a farmer. He succeeded so well in farming that he had been able to settle three of his sons in farms.

The truth is that successful men in any calling, farming included, cannot be either bred or trained. Success is the product of personal qualities which may to some extent be developed or stimulated by external influences, but in the main are inherent and not acquired.

As regards the landowning class Mr. Wrey's description is generally applicable. The representatives of this class who came to the Club were insistent that a wider view of their responsibilities and duties is needed to meet the new conditions. The ownership of agricultural land involves serious obligations. The advocates of Nationalisation are so far right in the contention which underlies their proposal, that the land is in the last resort the property of the whole nation. It follows, therefore, that those who exercise the rights and privileges of private ownership are in a fiduciary position; they are trustees for the nation. They are in fact responsible for seeing that it is put to its best economic use. To the question sometimes rhetorically asked, "Cannot I do as I like with my own?" the true answer is in the negative. No member of a civilised community can exercise

his rights of property without some limitation. This is the condition of living in a community under an organised system of society. The principle applies in a special sense to agricultural land. It will be readily admitted by taking an extreme hypothesis. Supposing all the owners of land suitable for Agriculture were to agree that they would no longer allow crops to be grown or stock to be kept—that it should all revert to a state of nature. Obviously the nation could not and would not allow it—the maintenance of Agriculture in one form or another being essential to the continued existence and well-being of the community. But if it be granted that the nation could not allow all to do this, on what logical principle can one claim to do it? It is clear, therefore, that the right to do what one likes with one's own does not really exist in the case of agricultural land and that the State is justified in imposing conditions upon its ownership.

The principle upon which the State has dealt with owners of agricultural land in recent times—if there can be said to have been a principle—has been unsound. It has made no attempt to interpose when an owner has deliberately wasted or left unproductive—for his own selfish ends—the resources of national wealth which he possessed, but it has heaped burdens of taxation on all landowners—alike upon the just and the unjust—which have prevented them from carrying out their proper duties and discharging the obligations of their position. Pressure upon landlords has converged from two sides, and in neither case has it been for the national advantage. On the one hand, the State has taken so large a proportion of the rental that the margin left has been inadequate to provide for the maintenance of the equipment of the farms or for the improvements necessary to keep pace with the needs of progressive tenants, while on the other hand, the statutory liabilities of the landlord to his tenants have been made more onerous and his powers of replacing indifferent occupiers of the land by others more capable have been curtailed.

The interest of the nation is greater than that of individuals, and its paramount interest is the maintenance of

the productivity of the land itself. I venture to recall some words which I wrote nearly a decade ago, which are, I think, still pertinent :—

“ Whether its ownership remains in private lands, is vested in the State or in local authorities, or is transferred to the occupiers, the land must be fairly dealt by, and the maintenance of its fertility should, in the national interest, be the paramount consideration. Warnings are not lacking from new countries that the self-interest of the occupier is not always a sufficient protection for the land. Under whatever conditions the land may be farmed, no system can, from the national point of view, be satisfactory which allows the economic exigencies of the present generation to endanger the nation's wealth.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *An Agricultural Faggot* (P. S. King & Son).

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FOREIGNER.

BEING, as I have remarked, very English in its collective outlook, the Club naturally displayed the characteristic English attitude of self-depreciation in utterance combined with self-complacency in thought. Our curious habit of reviling ourselves and minimising our achievements is rooted in arrogance. We are too proud to boast. Nevertheless we are steadfastly of opinion that on the whole no other nation is in any respect superior to our own, or does anything much better. However deprecating we may appear, we have very little real sympathy with the person—

“Who praises, with enthusiastic tone,  
All centuries but this, and every country but his own.”

The occasions on which the attention of the Club was specially drawn to “foreign parts” were few. In one of the later papers Mr. A. G. L. Rogers dealt with the position of the agricultural labourer at home and abroad. He pointed out that modern Agriculture is a world industry, affected by international influences and that it must therefore be of importance to a farmer to know what expenses are incurred in other countries for labour, as well as in other costs of production. Yet very seldom is any attempt made to supply him with such information, one reason being the difficulty of making any just comparison of the labour conditions in different countries. He added that there seemed to be only one way to make any satisfactory estimate of the relative progress made by the workers in each country and that was the historical method.

Mr. Rogers proceeded :—

All students of law will remember the famous chapter in Maine's *Ancient Law*, in which, after tracing the development

of the theory of Government from the family to the State, he says "that the movement of progressive Societies has hitherto been a movement from Status to Contract." By this he means that in primitive Society a man, and still more a woman, belonged to a community known as the family and enjoyed the rights and liabilities of that community, whereas in modern Societies each individual is made responsible for his own acts. Under primitive conditions a man is almost born in the trade which he is destined to follow all his life. In its fullest development the system is known as caste, and is found still existent in India and the South Sea Islands. There, as is well known, are races who follow one trade.

A study of the condition of agricultural labourers in Europe during the last three or four hundred years shows us a body of workers in an almost similar economic condition which we may call that of status. When the feudal system broke up and the modern capitalistic system took its place the industrial worker in the towns rapidly assumed the condition described as the more advanced by Sir Henry Maine. He was free to follow what occupation he chose, his wages were regulated by the law of supply and demand. Higher skill led to better remuneration, but the obligation of the employer ceased when there was no longer any work for him to do. As a result his wages rose far above those of the worker in Agriculture, but he was more liable to unemployment, and having no means of support in that emergency he ran the risk of complete ruin and even starvation. The agricultural labourers remained for many years still in the more primitive condition. They followed the same occupation generation after generation, generally in the same village, often on the same farm. This was the normal state of things in the eighteenth century. Wages were almost nominal and were practically the same for all classes of labour. A shilling a day in the early part of the century, a shilling and two pence during the period of rising prices in the latter part, and what is more remarkable these wages often not paid for many weeks. Among the Brandsby Accounts which I examined for the "History of Agriculture and Prices" were several receipted bills from labourers which showed that no payment had been made for months, and in one or two cases for a year or even two years. It is clear that the men did not depend on their cash wages for their living, but regarded them as a means whereby such necessary articles as they could not make themselves were bought or replaced when worn out. The man and his family depended for their livelihood on payment in kind, for I do not think there was much time left over when his day's work was done to cultivate a garden. The modern allotment was, of course, unknown. Support is given to this theory by the family budgets, which

were published by Sir Frederick Eden, Arthur Young, and others. They nearly all show a constant deficit. This had puzzled many people both in modern and in earlier times, and various suppositions have been put forward to account for it. The most popular among the contemporary writers was that the labourer stole the residue; among the sentimental writers of to-day it is ascribed to charity. I have very little doubt that it was honestly earned, and though it is generally held that these farm labourers lived in a state of the direst poverty, constantly underfed and with no prospect before them but an old age in the workhouse and a pauper's grave, I believe this estimate to be inexact, and that while there was much hardship and little hope of anything better, there was little real misery or starvation till economic conditions were upset by the wars with France. If the labourer was badly paid he was seldom out of work and so deprived of all means of subsistence. He might be ill-fed, but he never starved. He was of the country, and the country was of him. One could not exist without the other, and he survived so long as Agriculture existed. Even when prices rose he was not so severely affected as the town worker, and though the influence of the Spenshamland Act was bad and the principle unsound, it is known that some labourers managed to save considerable sums out of the doles that were given them. On the whole, it was, I believe, a peaceful primitive existence so long as external conditions remained constant.

If this is a true picture of the agricultural labourer of the eighteenth century in England, how does it compare with the analogous class elsewhere? The answer, I believe, is that all fared much alike. Life in Scotland was a little harder. Hours were longer, for some of the farm servants rose even earlier than their English fellows, and worked—in summer at any rate—more hours. The standard of comfort was lower, food was harder to get and of a coarser kind. Feudal customs lasted in some places, and there was perhaps less personal liberty. Much the same conditions ruled in Ireland, except that the feudal system never really took root in that island. But serfdom, the last traces of which had long before disappeared in Great Britain, still lingered in France till they were violently destroyed at the Revolution, though the economic conditions remained. In Scandinavia, Russia and in the greater part of Germany it survived in its primitive vigour, and the farm workers of those countries as described in Marshall's *Tour in Russia*, were simply the slaves of their masters. They were born cultivators of the soil and they scarcely knew whether they were working for their masters or for themselves. In this respect, at any rate, the English farm worker was in a better position than any of his fellows elsewhere, for undoubtedly some, though not many,



farm workers in England by industry and thrift managed to accumulate sufficient to enable them to take farms on their own account even in the eighteenth century.

This state of things obviously could not last after it had once begun to break up. As long as all workers were in much the same condition the system remained in vigour, but as soon as the newer system began and men became more and more dependent on the services of others, the disintegration became more rapid, and those who lagged behind in the race suffered more and more from the disadvantages of both systems.

Let us now consider what are the essentials of contract among a free people, and see if we can ascertain how far the English farm worker has succeeded in securing for himself those claims without which his position would inevitably be far worse than that of his ancestors; and at the same time let us endeavour to ascertain whether the farm workers in other countries have progressed further, or not. The most important, though seldom the first secured, is the free right of combination for collective bargaining. This right, which is the foundation-stone on which all contract rests, was strenuously denied to workers of all classes during the Middle Ages, and though combinations and strikes on modern lines took place in towns, the agricultural workers were forbidden under the severest penalties to form any Unions. The Combination Laws were not repealed till 1825, and even in 1834 the agricultural labourers were liable to charges of conspiracy if they attempted to form a Union to raise wages. When Arch formed his Union in 1872, the legal rights of combination were secured beyond recall, but then and for many years afterwards the movement was regarded with suspicion and even active opposition by many employers, while even at the present time a breach of the peace in connection with a strike is more severely punished by some magistrates than an assault in a private quarrel. It was not till the passing of the Corn Production Act of 1917 that the law not only permitted but even expected agricultural labourers to combine for the purpose of representing their common aspirations and claims. On the Continent of Europe the right of combination is now fully recognised, but in one country at least it is of recent date. The German Government issued a new code dealing with farm labour on January 29, 1919, which introduced some important changes in the law. In Prussia, under the law of 1854, agricultural labourers were liable to a year's imprisonment if they take concerted action for causing persons in the service of a certain employer or number of employers to go out on strike, or if with a view to obstructing the work of such persons they endeavour to compel either the employers or the authorities to do certain things or to grant certain concessions. By the new decree the

provisions of the Civil Code with regard to contract of service apply to persons engaged in Agriculture, and political activity or agitation in connection with Trade Unions is not a legal ground for terminating a contract of service. Freedom to combine, therefore, is acknowledged at last all over Germany. Agricultural Trade Unions are, however, of quite modern growth even in countries where they have for many years been legal, and in some cases farm workers are not combined in a specialised Union, but are admitted into a Union of other workers. Many agricultural labourers in England are members of the Workers' Union. Irish farm workers are members of the Transport Workers' Union, and it appears that in Belgium and elsewhere the Association to which they belong has religious or other views as an essential part of their programme. Nor are the Unions everywhere very strong. At the recent International Congress of Land Workers it was estimated that only 10 per cent. of the Italian and 30 per cent. of the German land workers were represented, while 50 per cent. of the land workers of Great Britain are enrolled in one or other of the Unions which admit agricultural labourers. Whatever the explanation of this may be, it seems clear from the prominence given to the claim for the right of combination in the programme of the International Conference which is due to be held this year at Geneva in connection with the League of Nations, that the promoters consider that this claim has not been fully conceded everywhere, at any rate to the same extent as is admittedly the case in England.

The second item in the list of points that go to make up complete freedom of contract is the abolition of all payment in kind, and the remuneration of the worker by a cash wage only. Truck has long been abolished in every civilised country, except in Agriculture and domestic service; but, nevertheless, in every country, even where farm workers do not live in the farmer's house, a more or less highly developed system prevails by which a labourer gets part of his income in food or other allowances. It is popular in some places, and, as the articles can be consumed by the recipient or otherwise used for his own benefit and need not be sold, the system is not open to the abuses usually associated with truck; but it is clear that with the growth of industrial organisation the recipient of wages in kind is in a less satisfactory position than one who can lay out his wages in whatever way he chooses. In England the system of payment in kind has been in a moribund condition for a long time, and the few allowances that survive form a very small part of a worker's income. But even in Scotland we find the old system still in vogue. Thus, in Wigtownshire a ploughman who in 1919 earned 30s. a week also received in allowances house and garden, 100 stones of oatmeal, 11 ton of potatoes, 5 tons of coal, and other small articles,

the whole being valued at 16s. 6d. a week. In Berwickshire the married ploughman is usually provided with a house, valued at from £4 to £6 a year. A common practice is to allow a ploughman so many yards of potatoes in the drill, the maximum being 1,800 yds., though often 1,600, 1,200 or 800 yds. are all that are given. Sometimes instead of supplying potatoes in the drill an allowance is made of one or two tons of dressed or undressed potatoes. It is fairly common to allow him the keep of a cow, which is generally owned by the worker but sometimes by the employer. It is not usual for the employer to provide coal or firewood, but the cartage of these articles, and also of the man's flitting when he changes his employment, is done by the employer. Compare this with the agreement made in Sweden after the long dispute between the employers and workers in Agriculture, which was only settled in 1919. The worker gets rather less than £1 a week in wages, but in addition he receives 600 kilos of rye, 250 kilos of wheat, 400 kilos of barley or meslin, 50 kilos of peas, as well as 4 litres of skim milk, or 3 litres full milk and 2 litres skim milk a day. He also gets about a third of an acre of well-manured and tilled ground for potatoes, a cottage, with outhouse and kitchen garden, fuel, free straw or moss litter; free doctor and medicine for at least three months of the year, and free hospital attendance both for himself and his family. It is not possible to estimate the value of these allowances in sterling cash, but judging from the amount of the cash received it seems probable that they are equal in value to his wages. While, therefore, the English labourer receives only about 8 per cent. of his wages in allowances, the Wigtownshire ploughman receives about 33 per cent., and the Swedish labourer perhaps 50 per cent. The latter appears to belong to the class known in Germany as Landinsten, a class of small holders, who work for wages. In Schleswig-Holstein, before the war, the typical income of such a worker was—cash wages, 340 marks or £17, and allowances valued at 567 marks or £28 7s., a total of 907 marks or £45 7s., which he added to by selling the produce of his own labour on his holding. In this case the allowances amounted to nearly 63 per cent. of the total income. The influence of economic development is clearly shown in these instances, which might be increased, and it is noteworthy that the result of the rise in wages that has taken place since 1914 has in every country affected the cash wage chiefly and the value of the allowances very little.

Every enquiry which is made into the conditions of agricultural workers comments on the fact that so long as the labourer is boarded and lodged, so long that is, as he, or she, is treated as part of the family, which is another way of describing the conditions of status as defined by Sir Henry Maine, the

hours of labour are indefinite. They are picturesquely described in England as "all the hours God gave," and more succinctly in France as "from dawn to dusk." I need hardly give illustrations from English experience. Every one knows that except in winter, when work is slack and light is deficient, the hours were long, seldom less than 60 a week, and often longer. Nor is it necessary to relate how they have been reduced by degrees to a normal 50 in summer and 48 in winter, with occasional spells of overtime. The maximum hours are not fixed by statute or by regulation, but a more powerful influence has been at work which has brought about a standard day, namely the pressure of economic law. I am unable, however, to ascertain which party is the chief instrument in bringing about the change. The farmers say that their men are so well paid that they will not work overtime. The workers say that the farmers are so stingy that they will not give their labourers a chance of doing so. The result, at any rate, has led to a shorter day, and probably to greater efficiency. Every one knows that cheap labour is inefficient labour, and, as long ago as 1791, Arthur Young pointed out that the badly paid French farm worker was less efficient than the English labourer, though even the latter was not paid any too well. These long hours have passed away, and milk-maids in Scotland no longer rise at two or three o'clock in the morning to provide customers with warm milk for breakfast. Farm servants in Cumberland are not likely to work up to eleven o'clock at night getting in the hay. But hours are not uniform everywhere yet. In England the normal total is 2,564 a year, while in some parts of Scotland the total, by agreement, is 2,817. In Holland they range from 2,500 to 3,200, and in Germany the authorised number is 2,926, and in Denmark the estimated number is exactly the same. In France, however, much longer hours are still worked, and in an agreement made last July between the employers and workers of a part of the Department of Seine-et-Marne the number of hours was settled at 3,380 for the year. Although this appears very high it is not incredible, for we read in the same authority that gives us the text of the agreement that in some districts the hours are from 5 to 7. In all of these countries, therefore, the normal hours of labour are longer than in England, even assuming that overtime is worked here to a larger extent than is generally admitted. It is difficult to say what the usual hours in America and Canada are, but it is generally admitted that they are longer than here. Italy appears to be the sole country where an eight-hour day has been introduced, and the conditions in that country are in many respects totally different to those of countries with a temperate climate.

Cash wages and shorter hours are, however, of little value in

gaining economic independence if the wages are withheld, and it is a clear sign of progress from status to contract when the worker succeeds in getting his wages paid promptly and regularly. Money loses half its value when paid at the end of a year, or six months, as it was to the labourer of Brandsby in the eighteenth century. Even when paid monthly the result is that debts accumulate, and it is not surprising that those who attach importance to the position which economic freedom gives to the worker press for a weekly payment of wages, and for such a payment to be made on Friday, so that full advantage may be taken of the Saturday afternoon for shopping. In many parts of England this is now customary, but there are still places where wages are paid fortnightly, and in some districts it is usual to keep a week's wages in hand. An even worse system is in vogue in some places where the full wages are only paid at the end of the term of service, sums being advanced as required in the meantime. Conditions are generally more backward in other countries than in England. In Berwickshire for instance, and I suspect elsewhere in Scotland, wages are calculated by the week, but are paid monthly. In France, wages are calculated by the day or by the month, never by the week; and it is a point on which the Unions have had to insist in their agreements with the employers, that wages should be paid regularly on Saturday night. As a rule, however, except perhaps in Holland, farm workers on the Continent are not paid more often, I believe, than once a month.

In the discussion which followed Mr. W. R. Smith, who had then recently been elected President of the newly formed International Land Workers' Federation, observed that the establishment of that body afforded evidence of a change in the position of rural workers. The conditions of one country affected those of other countries and it was desirable to link them up and to obtain mutual knowledge. Mr. Rea said he had been looking at some old account books which belonged to his father and grandfather and the contrast in method of payment for service then and now was very marked. Going back almost a hundred years he found that the labourers employed by his grandfather were paid only £5 in cash in a half-year, the rest of their remuneration being in kind, including free housing, potatoes, wool, wheat, barley, and oats for breadmaking, etc. Conditions were much harder, but he thought not less healthy. The labourer was

not enlightened then as now, and so long as the needs of the body were met he was satisfied. It was gratifying to learn that England was in advance of any country in the world in the matter of agricultural conditions, and the workers' representatives were to be congratulated on this position.

The last paper read before the Club was the only one which professed to deal explicitly with another country. This dealt with "Rural Life in Denmark," and was read by Mr. Nugent Harris. That part of it which described the Danish system of rural education has already been referred to.<sup>1</sup> The paper was embellished by a number of lantern slides, showing various scenes illustrative of the diverse activities of Danish Agriculture and rural life. Mr. Harris insisted, however, that though there were varied departments of enterprise—reclamation, afforestation, housing, dairying, rural industries, etc.—they were all inter-dependent and that the story of Denmark's progress must be studied as a whole. It was necessary to consider:—

1. How the co-operative movement was not started by the philanthropically disposed, but how it grew up locally, gradually, among the peasants in the villages, with its roots deep in the feeling of solidarity, and a sense of the benefits of mutual help among the peasants, which can be traced back to remote centuries. Therefore, no date can be given as in other European countries as to when it began.

2. How the Danish system of Agriculture was changed from corn production to dairying, with far-reaching effects, while the English farmer stuck to meat production. Events prove that the Danish choice was a right one, because dairy farming produces more food per acre of ground than meat production, and it allows full scope for, indeed, as Dr. Russell of Rothamsted has stated necessitates, those co-operative methods of business and production which have since dominated Danish Agriculture. The Dane—Segelcke—who played a prominent part in bringing about the change, it is interesting to note, first spent a year at Rothamsted, and then went straight to Denmark to take up his work. The striking testimony to the wisdom of the Danish choice came in the eighties and nineties, when Europe was flooded with cheap agricultural produce. Wheat fell to nearly half the price it had commanded in the sixties. English Agriculture suffered a terrible set-back, and did not begin to recover until

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter VII.

about 1896. Danish Agriculture, on the other hand, was able not only to weather the storm, but even to make headway all the time. The improvement in dairying reacted on the arable farming; the export of butter rose from 10,300 tons per annum in the late seventies to 100,000 tons per annum before the outbreak of war, and the yield of wheat rose from 30'9 to 35'5 bushels per acre.

3. How out of the success of Denmark's great pig and bacon industry, and side by side with its development, the poultry industry was established.

4. How out of the steady work done in reclamation and afforestation sprang many rural industries which assisted materially in the reconstruction of the nation. The rural industries of Denmark are the natural outcome of the main lines of its agricultural production.

5. How the agricultural machinery used in Denmark is built to suit the different soils, and on the lines laid down by the farmer, and not on those of the manufacturer.

6. How the system of agricultural education and technical instruction is based on the knowledge of what the markets want, not on what the producer thinks they should have.

But above all, and beyond all, the Danes assert that in all agricultural production not merely must they consider how to produce, but how the conditions of production affect the producer.

Mr. Harris prefaced his paper with an interesting summary of the manner in which Denmark recovered after the disastrous war of 1864, and, in concluding it, he said :—

Phoenix-like, Denmark has arisen from her ashes, a greater force among the nations of the earth than she has ever been. Re-establishing herself by a breadth of vision rare amongst peoples, by a love of knowledge which has been stimulated by her glorious traditions, by a recognition of the fact that out of the past is the present moulded, by love of art for art's sake, by securing a recognition of the fact that to have healthy minds it is necessary to develop healthy bodies, that education is the outcome not so much of book-learning as of a recognition of the humanities; that mind culture must precede soil culture; that self-government by the people through the people in association is much better than super-imposed government by the State; that all technical instruction, whether agricultural or industrial, must be based on what the market wants, not what the producer thinks the market should have; and last, but not least, that the agricultural industry is the mother industry from and through which all other industries are nourished and sustained—that no nation ever languished when its Agriculture

flourished, and no nation ever flourished when its Agriculture languished.

Captain Hinckes, in the paper already referred to,<sup>1</sup> summarised succinctly the conditions of the chief wheat-exporting countries, and after having done so observed that—

Wheat suffers from the disadvantage of not being a product from which the producer can get any advantage through improving the quality. Take the case of the Argentine, Australian or Canadian farmer who is in a position to grow wheat, meat or dairy produce. If he produces a good-quality cheese or meat he gradually establishes a special market, and I suggest that the object of every producer and manufacturer is to establish a special market. Therefore, when you hear of New Zealand lamb or Canadian butter or Argentine meat, it means that in that particular product the grower has succeeded in creating a special market. You do not hear of Australian wheat or Argentine wheat in the same way. We know that millers want particular qualities for making their mixtures, but still the producer does not get a special market by improving the quality of his wheat.

I have attempted to describe the factors affecting wheat production overseas. The crop is, as we have seen, subject to various handicaps ; perhaps its greatest advantage is that it is a hardy plant and that the colonist can embark on wheat growing with little capital. There is, moreover, the over-ruling consideration of price. High prices act as a magnet in bringing out supplies and as an incentive to production, while they serve equally as a deterrent to consumption. The overseas farmer is continually balancing the advantage of wheat growing as against the production of meat, etc., and high prices are sure to cause a swing of the pendulum towards a larger acreage, and no doubt new sources of supply will be opened up. The price that affects the farmer is the price on the farm, and in this connection the increase of railway freights, especially in America and Canada, where the wheat fields are far distant from the sea-board, is bound to have an important effect in keeping up prices.

In the discussion Sir T. H. Middleton remarked that the conditions which had enabled the United States to send wheat cheaply to this country had now passed away and new conditions had arisen. The tendency to increase the bacon output in America exhibited during the war was

<sup>1</sup> Chapter V.



continuing. The demand was for more meat and therefore the corn crop was likely to prove more profitable to the growers than the wheat crop. The war had certainly stimulated wheat production, but they were now going back to the normal acreage in the United States of America. The prospects as regards supplies were not so favourable as Captain Hinckes had indicated in his closing remarks, and it might be that conditions in America would result in Europe being left to look after its own cereal supplies.

During the life of the Club the conditions of Agriculture at home were sufficiently engrossing to occupy its attention, but had it continued it might usefully have given more consideration to the conditions of Agriculture overseas. The extent to which the factors of agricultural production thousands of miles away affect the economic position of the British farmer is even yet inadequately realised. The prices of nearly all his main products ultimately depend on the balance of conflicting and inter-acting forces all over the world. In all affairs of business the man who takes long views will, generally speaking, succeed better than him who keeps his eyes fixed on the immediate prospect. In the business of farming this is especially true because of the exceptionally long period required to adjust supply to demand. A factory can speed up or slow down its output at very short notice, but on a farm a crop must be sown at its proper season or not at all, and when once put in the ground it has to be disposed of when harvested whatever changes may have occurred in the markets. Still slower is the process of increasing or decreasing the output of meat. This being the case, it is curious that of all men of business farmers are probably the most prone to be affected by temporary movements and the least inclined to consider permanent tendencies. The rush of farmers to buy land at the inflated prices of the boom a year or two ago was an instance of short-sighted optimism, while on the other hand, a sudden fall in the corn or stock markets reduces them at once to despair, if their panic-stricken outcries represent their real opinions.

A closer study of the facts of the world's production and consumption of the products which compete with theirs tends to induce in producers a truer sense of proportion and perspective. It may be said that no amount of study will enable anyone to predict with certainty the level of prices a year hence. That is quite true. The weather still remains the dominant factor in every country and with every crop. But the movement of economic forces may, in some degree, be calculated if all the indications are taken into account and the probabilities carefully appraised. At present farmers are apt to be misguided by partial and spasmodic publication of isolated facts. Not long since, for instance, the entry of Japan into the world's wheat market as a buyer was widely quoted as evidence that prices would rise permanently. Of course the beginning of a change from rice to wheat as the staple cereal among the Japanese people is a significant fact. But even in a nation so extraordinarily adaptable as the Japanese, an alteration in the popular dietary is a slow process. Up to the present the influence of the new buyer has been negligible, and it will probably be many years before the quantity required will be sufficient to make any marked difference in the world's normal requirements. By that time supply will have had time to adjust itself to the increased demand, even if Japan herself does not in due course provide a large part of the wheat she requires in substitution for the rice it displaces.

The admirable organisation of the International Agricultural Institute is devised to provide the facts as to the world's production and consumption, and it publishes a large amount of useful information. It cannot be said, however, to reach the British farmer, or to be available for his use in a form which practically helps him in any large degree in his business.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE FUTURE OF THE VILLAGE.

SPECULATIONS about future economic conditions in the world at large, changes in the land system, advancement in scientific knowledge, improvements in farm practice, political experiments and all other conceivable developments come back at last to the heart of the matter—the prosperity of the village. There lies the original germ of British Agriculture; there also its ultimate object.

In a paper read in April, 1919, Sir Douglas Newton introduced the subject of "The Organisation of the Village," basing his remarks on the following summary of the recommendations of the Selborne Committee on Agricultural Policy after the war:—

1. That a general survey of the conditions of Agriculture should be made by the War Executive Committees, to form the basis of a report to the Board of Agriculture in all cases where these surveys disclosed the need of action to improve the conditions of village life.

2. That the report should be referred to the Agricultural Committee and to the Parish Council of the village concerned, in order that these bodies might give it their consideration and concur in its recommendations.

3. That in the event of the concurrence of these bodies, or in the case of an application being received by the Board from either of these local authorities, the Board should appoint a valuer to prepare a report as to the most practical way of improving conditions in the parish in respect of small occupying ownerships, allotments, small holdings, cottage gardens, parish recreation grounds, and the provision of a village hall.

4. That the valuer's report should then be communicated by the Board to the local authority, and be open for inspection by all interested persons.

5. That the Board should then send down an inspector to

hold a local enquiry to deal with all objections which might be raised.

6. That an approved and final scheme setting forth in detail the changes proposed, scheduling any land required to carry out the scheme, should then be submitted to the Board. It was also suggested that in all cases the details should receive the approval of the Agricultural Committee.

7. That the responsibility for carrying out the scheme should then rest with the County Agricultural Committee.

8. The subsequent responsibility for its administration should lie with the Parish Council, subject only to the general supervision of the Agricultural Committee ; or alternatively

9. That a public Utility Society should be entrusted with the duty of carrying the scheme into effect.

Sir Douglas Newton observed that as a rural dweller he believed the principles of these proposals to be entirely sound, though he regarded the machinery as unsatisfactory, and he made a number of suggestions for a better procedure. He concluded as follows :—

What then are the provisions which are to be regarded as being essential for the amenities of every rural parish? It is a difficult matter to summarise them, but they should, I think, include—

(a) *Cottage Gardens*.—The provision of a number of sanitary and suitable cottages with gardens attached, adequate to meet the requirements of the parish.

It is frequently found that gardens have not been provided, even in cases where this could, with but little disturbance or difficulty, be done.

A case recently came to my knowledge of some cottages which were many years ago dumped down on the waste of a manor, an unsuitable and unsatisfactory site for them ; but there they were, and there, owing to the sad shortage of housing in the locality, people had to live. The sites were so cramped that the cottages had no gardens, but there was plenty of grass land in the occupation of a neighbouring farmer, only separated from the cottages by an open ditch. The cottagers could not, however, get possession of this land, and they hardly dared to ask for it, as they were largely dependent upon the good-will of the farmer and his friends for their daily employment.

It was only after the open ditch, the only available repository for their refuse, had long become a public nuisance, that land could be obtained for the provision of the much-needed gardens.

That is the kind of case in which the timely intervention of an outside body can do much to sweep away a difficulty.

In a general way it will be found more economic and equally satisfactory to the householder, to attach a small, rather than a large, garden to his cottage. But if this be done, it is desirable that a strip of land should, if possible, be provided immediately behind the cottage gardens, and divided up for the general use of all, or any of, the cottagers desiring such additional land. This plan is in many respects preferable to having a large garden attached to every cottage, as in the event of one of the cottagers not requiring his garden the land is apt to be left derelict, while if a small garden only be attached this risk is greatly minimised. Moreover, if access to additional land be provided in this manner, an energetic householder can, if he so desires, be provided with a larger area to cultivate. It also has the further advantage in that there is less risk of land being wasted in the case of the householders not requiring it; for being in the adjacent field it can in many cases be absorbed into the neighbouring farmed lands.

So much, then, for cottage gardens.

(b) *Milk*.—The provision of an adequate supply of milk must be looked upon as an absolute essential—and how often this is lacking in the villages, even in the very villages in which the most milk is produced.

Farmers, who are milk producers, object and reasonably object, to supplying small quantities of milk and skim milk. They object to being at one and the same time small retailers and large wholesalers, with the result that often little or no milk is available for local residents in the village in which it is produced.

It is not, however, in most cases, a difficult matter to devise a scheme which may overcome the objections of the farmer and at the same time provide for the local requirements in regard to milk.

It may, perhaps, be found of interest to set out the steps which were taken recently in a certain village to overcome this difficulty.

The local milk-producing farmer was approached and asked to provide milk at wholesale prices in agreed quantities, subject only to monthly revision. A labourer, working with the farmer, who also happened to have a small shop in the village, undertook to keep a register of all persons willing to come to his shop for the purpose of obtaining milk or skim milk. The labourer made himself responsible for supplying milk at retailed prices in the quantities requisitioned on his register, purchasing the milk wholesale from the farmer. All persons on the register were required to pay for the milk for which they had made requisi-

tion, whether they took it or not, the register being revised fortnightly or monthly. Any person not on the register who required milk, could obtain it from this source only in the event of one of the registered persons being willing to give up or reduce his supply.

Under this arrangement the farmer was saved from petty annoyances caused by callers coming to his back door for small quantities of milk. He was also secured against bad debts, while only those persons having business with him came on to his farm premises. The villagers are now sure of their milk supply and are saved from the necessity of a muddy walk to the farm premises with the possibility of being unable even then to get their requirements met.

(c) *Other "Essential" Requirements.*—Amongst other "essential" provisions must also be included arrangements for the satisfactory disposal of sewage, either in the gardens or otherwise; the provision of a supply of wholesome water and other matters of a like kind necessary for the health of the village. Mention should perhaps be made, when considering essential conditions, of access to playing fields.

While, however, the County Committee can, and should, if desired, assist with the provision of the ground required, I do not think they ought to go much further, as the management of the ground and its use to the best advantage should be left to the villagers themselves. In this respect the village community can well work out their own salvation.

In addition to these essential requirements the schedule should draw attention to other minor matters, which are scarcely less important in that they go far to make up the amenities of rural life; matters such as arranging for the marketing of the produce grown in the village, and the development of suitable rural industries. It is most desirable that greater facilities should be given for the use of the telephone. A first practical step should be for all country offices, now fitted with the ordinary telegraph, to have their instruments converted into telephones, and that all villages, through which posts carrying wires are now laid, should, on demand, be provided with a telephone service. The party telephone line is a failure. The essence of all communication is that it should be speedy, and that it should also be secret. The party telephone can never be made secret, and that is the principal cause of its failure. The much-needed expansion of the telephone service in rural districts must take place on the lines of an efficient and secret service.

I have not made any detailed reference to the question of the development of rural industries, the subject is far too large and varied for inclusion in this paper, and would require a paper all to itself. The encouragement of appropriate kinds of rural

industry can and should play an important part in rural reconstruction. A suitable industry will provide alternative sources of income, and part-time employment in slack periods of the year, while if it is a full-time industry it may well provide useful and welcome employment for the wife and the family.

Whatever steps are taken, however, to re-establish old, or to develop new, industries, sweated labour should be carefully guarded against, as no permanent advantage can accrue either to the State or to those employed in the industry, if the industry is unable to pay a living wage to its workers.

Such then is the machinery which should be established, and these the plain matter-of-fact lines along which village organisation should proceed.

There is, however, one word of caution, which I would like to utter, and it is this. In any schemes which are promoted there must be no taint of patronage, and there must be no trace of welfare, that is to say in the sense of instructing people as to what is good for them.

No one hates more than the dweller in a rural district being told by some superior kind of person what is beneficial for him, how he is to spend his spare time, and the money which he has, in many cases, so dearly won.

He desires, and rightly desires, and what is more he intends, to spend both his time and his money, as he likes, when he likes, and where he likes ; and the furthest point to which any assistance can advantageously go is to enable him to do this under good conditions and in the manner which will give the greatest benefit to his family and to himself.

In conclusion, I would say that if it is possible to sum up in one word the essence of a policy of rural organisation and development—that one word is “sympathy.” Sympathy—not merely the sympathy of a few kindly words, but a real, enduring, constructive sympathy, the sympathy of doing everything possible to advance the cause of the rural dweller.

Too long has the State treated him with neglect, but this policy must be changed. The State owes to each one of its citizens, whether they be townsmen or countrymen, the right to live, the right to live a decent life, and a life in which the broad avenues of opportunity shall be open to all.

The subsequent discussion ranged mainly round the question of the cottage and the wider implications of the subject received less attention. Colonel Abel Smith, however, put in a word for co-operation, which he thought might form the basis of village organisation. He also supported Sir Douglas Newton in the view that the services

of trained organisers were required to initiate village enterprises.

About a year previously I had ventured to introduce the subject of "Village Life after the War," and had suggested that an organised attempt should be made to promote the formation of Village Clubs on principles suited to the new conditions of rural life. The reception of the idea tentatively thrown out for discussion was highly favourable. Among the speakers who supported it were Sir Ailwyn Fellowes, Mr. H. Padwick, Mr. W. S. Gibbard, Mr. John Evens, Mr. Rea, Mr. George Edwards, Mr. Orwin, Mr. Dallas, Mr. George Nicholls, Mr. Hewitt, Mr. T. Lovell, and Mr. Haman Porter. From other representative persons—landowners, labourers, farmers, and parsons—I received communications welcoming the proposal which encouraged me to proceed, and in due course the Village Clubs Association was formed, based on the following fundamental principles :—

1. The Village Club should be the centre of all social activities, and of all forms of physical and mental recreation.
2. It should be self-supporting and free from the elements of patronage.
3. All inhabitants of the village, without distinction of class or opinion, and, when practicable, of both sexes, should be eligible for membership.
4. The entire control should be vested in a Committee elected either by (*a*) the members, or (*b*) the members and all residents of the parish.

These principles were adopted after careful and prolonged discussion with representatives of all classes and of all interests in rural life, and they have been widely accepted throughout the country.

In spite of somewhat exceptional difficulties and of very inadequate resources the Village Clubs Association has done much to stimulate the development—or resuscitation—of the community spirit in rural England and to promote the provision of social, educational and recreational facilities in the villages.



At one of the later meetings of the Club, Mr. Harold Lacey, then Secretary to the Association, read a paper on Village Clubs, dealing not only with the general principles of the movement but also with some of the practical problems which had arisen in connection with it. An interesting discussion arose in which many who were themselves concerned in the management of village clubs took part. Among the speakers were Mr. Holland Martin, C.B. (one of the Treasurers of the Village Clubs Association), Mr. Child Bayley and Mr. Cloudesley Brereton (visitors), Mr. A. Goddard (one of the hon. secretaries of the Village Clubs Association), Mr. George Nicholls and Mr. J. T. Gurd.

On this subject I may be suspected of bias, but I cannot refrain from expressing the opinion that the disregard of the recommendations of the Selborne Committee, which in addition to the proposals summarised by Sir Douglas Newton explicitly advocated the establishment of village clubs and institutes, supported as they were by other bodies, such as the Committee on Adult Education, eminently qualified to offer sound advice to the Government, has been most unfortunate. The problem was of too great magnitude and complexity to be adequately dealt with by voluntary effort, and the meagre assistance given from public funds was wholly insufficient to allow of such a universal and comprehensive effort as was needed. It is pitiful to reflect on the millions spent on temporary and ineffective measures when a fraction of the sum would have sufficed to give such an impetus to village reconstruction as would have established a new era in rural England and promoted, as nothing else could do, the peace and contentment of the villages.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CONCLUSION.

THE Agricultural Club was, as has been described, an offshoot of the Agricultural Wages Board; there were those who considered that the decease of the parent did not necessarily involve the slaughter of the child. This view so far prevailed that there have not yet been any formal obsequies, and, on paper, the Club still exists in a state of suspended animation. A few members suggested a continuance of the meetings and others suggested a modification of its constitution. One interesting proposal was that the basis of the Club should be "drastically broadened," and that it should be made "a centre of agricultural activity for the Empire."

The distinctive and unique character of the Club was, as has been explained in the foregoing pages, that its constitution provided not in a general way that all persons interested in Agriculture could join, but that the three classes—landowners, farmers and labourers—should have equal status and rights. There are other bodies which invite all three classes to join them, but by the circumstances of the case the overwhelming majority of members are of the two former classes and if labourers were to join they would have no effective share in the control. Even if they join it is very seldom possible for them to attend meetings. Other classes may sometimes have business bringing them to London, but unless there is a gathering of the Unions, labourers and their representatives seldom have occasion to come to the metropolis. The meetings of the Wages Board brought a certain number of workers' representatives to town and enabled them to attend the meetings of the Club. When that occasion for their presence ceased the chance of securing a good attendance of labourers disappeared.

Many communications from members conveyed to me the general sense of regret that these gatherings had ceased. I quote a few sentences :—

“ It was a unique opportunity for men and women of all classes interested in the land to meet and confer on common ground, and did much to promote a good understanding between them.”

“ It would be a great pity if the Agricultural Club came to an end, for I know of no other where all representatives of Agriculture can meet on such equal terms and under such happy circumstances. Every one felt they could say exactly what they pleased and be sure of a patient and sympathetic hearing.”

“ It appears impossible to carry on the Club ; I am sorry for this, but it is like some other things : I suppose we must put up with it.”

“ I should like to see the Club continued in some form ; it certainly helped to bring both sides into close touch.”

“ Surely it is a pity to let so good an opportunity of getting all sides and all sorts of opinions ventilated to die.”

“ The chief value of the Club meetings, in my opinion, lay in the opportunity for joint discussion between farm workers and farm owners.”

“ I deeply regret that such a useful body has, perforce, to come to an end.”

“ In common with all its members I shall be sorry for its disappearance.”

Whether in other days and under other conditions a similar institution may reappear it is unnecessary to speculate. That the Agriculture Club justified its existence and served its purpose may fairly be claimed. Perhaps—one never can tell—its usefulness might have waned, and it may be that it would have lagged superfluous on the scene—than which there is no more ignominious fate. No signs of diminished vitality, however, had appeared, and its end came while its activities were unimpaired.



# APPENDIX

## LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE CLUB

- |                                               |                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Acland, The Rt. Hon. F. D.,<br>M.P.           | Drage, G.<br>Durstun, T.               |
| Ailwyn, The Lord, K.C.V.O.,<br>K.B.E.         | Edwards, George, M.P., O.B.E.          |
| Anderson, Newell                              | Edwards, L. R.                         |
| *Ashby, A. W.                                 | Evens, John                            |
| Atkins, C. W.                                 | Ernle, The Lord                        |
| *Bankes, Lord Justice<br>Beard, Councillor J. | *Farmer, Prof. J. B., F.R.S.,<br>D.Sc. |
| *Bethune, General Sir E.,<br>K.C.B.           | Firkins, F. W. J.                      |
| Black, D.                                     | Gauntlett, E. B.                       |
| *Bledisloe, The Lord                          | Gibbard, W. S.                         |
| Blomfield, Capt. H. Massie                    | Glew, J. T.                            |
| Boscawen, Lady Margaret                       | *Goddard, A., C.B.E.                   |
| Bower, F.                                     | Goodwin, F.                            |
| Brittain, W. H.                               | Gordon, G.                             |
| Butcher, Gerald W.                            | Gray, Robert                           |
|                                               | Green, F. E.                           |
| Campbell, Colin                               | Green, Robert                          |
| Carlisle, Mrs.                                | Gurd, J. T.                            |
| Carlton, H. W.                                |                                        |
| Carter, Miss                                  | *Hall, Sir A. D., K.C.B.               |
| Cattlow, H. F.                                | Harben, Mrs. Agnes H.                  |
| Champion, B.                                  | Harding, Cyril                         |
| Cochrane, W.                                  | Harrison, E. C.                        |
| Cotton, Col. The Hon. R. S.                   | Hazlerigg, Sir Arthur, Bart.           |
| Crawford, Mrs. V. M.                          | Henderson, G. E.                       |
|                                               | Hewitt, G. E.                          |
| Dallas, George                                | Hewlett, Maurice                       |
| Davies, Sydney                                | Higdon, T. G.                          |
| Davies, W.                                    | Hobbs, R. W.                           |
| Dewhurst, W.                                  | *Hobhouse, The Rt. Hon.<br>Henry       |
| Dill, T. R. Colquhoun                         |                                        |

\* Elected under Rule 3.

- Holman, M. H.  
 Holmes, W.  
 Hope, Collingwood, K.C.,  
     C.B.E.  
 House, Mrs.  
 Hughes, C. H.  
 Humphreys, G. A.  
 Hunter, Miss  
 Husband, T. F., I.S.O.
- Ismay, James H.
- Jarry, E. A.  
 \*Jones, Prof. C. Bryner, M.Sc.  
 Jones, Richard Ll.
- Kains-Jackson, C.  
 Kemm, T.  
 Kenyon, The Lord, K.C.V.O.  
 Ketelby, Miss  
 Kidner, S., O.B.E.  
 Kindred, J.
- Lawrence, C. W. J.  
 \*Lennard, R. V.  
 Lobjoit, W. G.  
 Lovell, Thomas  
 Luckhurst, J. W.
- Macarthur, A.  
 Mackenzie, T.  
 \*Mackintosh, J. M.  
 \*Mallon, J. J.  
 Mansell, Alfred  
 Mather, Miss  
 Mathews, E.  
 \*May, W. A.  
 \*Middleton, Sir T. H., K.B.E.  
 Miller, W. S.  
 Mitchinson, Rev. R. S.  
 Moore, H. F.  
 Morrall, J.  
 Moscrop, A., O.B.E.  
 Moss-Blundell, E. W.
- Neame, F. Ivo  
 Nicholls, George, O.B.E.
- Orgill, Miss  
 Orwin, C. S.  
 Overman, H., C.B.E.  
 Owen, Miss A. L. E.
- Padwick, H., C.B.E.  
 \*Page-Roberts, Capt. F. W.  
 Park, R. H.  
 Patterson, R. G., O.B.E.  
 Peel, Major H.  
 Player, W. J. Percy, M.B.E.  
 Popplewell, F.  
 Porter, Haman  
 Pott, Miss Gladys  
 Proby, Col. D.  
 Proby, Captain, M.C.
- Rea, G. G., C.B.E.  
 Rees, W. L.  
 Rew, Sir R. Henry, K.C.B.  
 Richards, Robert  
 Rippon, A. E. S.  
 Robbins, R. R., C.B.E.  
 \*Roberts, The Rt. Hon. G. H.,  
     M.P.  
 Roberts, John  
 \*Rogers, A. G. L.  
 Rosbotham, S. T.  
 Russell, Dr. E. J., O.B.E.,  
     D.Sc.  
 Ryland, T. H.
- Saward, Miss F.  
 \*Selborne, The Earl of, K.G.,  
     G.C.M.G.  
 Shepherd, T. D.  
 Smith, Col. Abel H.  
 Smith, Lady Mabel  
 Smith, S. A.  
 Smith, W. R., M.P.  
 Sparrow, A. G.

\* Elected under Rule 3.

Stanley, R. E.	Wadman, A.
Stobart, Mrs. B.	Walker, R. B.
Stonier, Mrs. F. E.	Watson, H.
Stubbs, Mrs. Agnes	*Weaver, Sir Lawrence, K.B.E.
Sturge-Gretton, Mrs. M.	Webb, Miss U. K.
	Wicksteed, Charles
*Talbot, Dame M. L., D.B.E.	Wilkins, Mrs. L., O.B.E.
Thomson, T.	Williams, T. Llew
Turnor, Christopher	Woodhead, Denton

\* Elected under Rule 3.





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