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BACK TO THE LAND

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BY

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FOREWORD

It is natural, perhaps, at a time when unemployment in many of the great industries of the country is so great and so persistent, that the possibility of finding an outlet upon the land for many of the redundant workers in urban and mining industries should be considered. On the face of things, indeed, this should be something more than a possibility. Responsible statesmen have drawn attention to the disproportion of industrial and rural workers in Britain by contrast with other great countries, and they and other social economists have commented upon the persistence of the peasant farmer in all the older countries except our own.

The facts cannot be refuted, but the interpretation of them commonly given is misleading. It ignores the economic evolution of Britain in the last 150 years, which eliminated so many of the peasant farmers. It takes no account of the dependence of this country on its export manufacturing trade, and on its carrying services. It overlooks the necessity imposed on non-industrialised countries for exporting agricultural produce. It forgets that a standard of living lower, and often far lower, than that which has been achieved by the rural workers in Britain is accepted in all the peasant-farming countries of the rest of the world.

In the following pages, the authors have traced the history of attempts to re-settle the land in England, and they have indicated and discussed the limiting factors. It is no part of their purpose to discourage or discredit

the provision of smallholdings, but they are impressed with the danger of looking to land settlement as a means even of the smallest alleviation of industrial unemployment, and they feel that the advocacy which it has received calls for a reply.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE DRIFT FROM THE LAND	1
II. HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT	10
Land as Poor Relief	11
The Chartist Settlements	13
Three Acres and a Cow	14
The Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908	18
1908-1914	20
The Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, 1919	29
The Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1926	34
The Agricultural Land (Utilisation) Act, 1931	35
Industrial Unemployment and the Land Settlement Association	36
III. SIZES AND TYPES OF SMALL HOLDINGS	40
Sizes of Holdings	40
Holdings, 1 to 5 acres	43
Holdings, 5 to 20 acres	44
Holdings, 20 to 50 acres	45
Types of Farming	48
Dairy Holdings	48
Mixed Holdings	49
Market-garden Holdings	50
Poultry Holdings	54
Cottage Holdings	55
IV. THE STATUTORY SMALL HOLDERS	56
Applicants	58
Types of Farming	61
Types of Tenant	61
Capital Resources	65
Duration of Tenancies	65

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
V.	THE LESSONS OF LAND SETTLEMENT.	68
VI.	THE FUTURE OF LAND SETTLEMENT	77
	A Career for the Industrial Unemployed ?	78
	Unemployment Relief	87
	The Rural Community	90