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**LARGE AND SMALL
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LARGE AND SMALL HOLDINGS

A STUDY OF ENGLISH AGRICULTURAL
ECONOMICS

BY

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TRANSLATED BY RUTH KENYON
WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS BY THE AUTHOR

Cambridge:
at the University Press

1911

TO THE MEMORY OF MY FRIEND
ARTHUR WILSON-FOX, C.B.
BY WHOSE EARLY DEATH
ENGLISH AGRICULTURE HAS LOST ONE
WHO HAD ITS PROSPERITY AT HEART

PREFACE

THE German edition of this book appeared in 1904¹. When the Cambridge University Press decided to publish the present translation I realised that it would be necessary to add a considerable amount of supplementary matter. In the historical part of the book it was desirable to notice the publications of the six intervening years on the question of the decay of the yeomanry, although they have not altered my views as to the causes of the disappearance of that class. But above all it was necessary to take the Small Holdings Act of 1908 into consideration. I therefore went to England in the summer of 1910 in order to study its working on the spot, so far as it has gone at present. The statistics have been brought up to 1909 so far as was possible. The appendix on "The Modern Small Holder" did not appear in the German edition. It is an attempt briefly to outline some new impressions received as to the psychological aspects of the small holdings question. My personal study of the question was of course mainly made in the course of 1903, when I spent six months touring rural England with this end in view. It is a pleasant duty to offer my warm thanks here to all those who so kindly helped me with information. It is not possible to name them all, for if they were numerous in 1903, they were still more numerous in 1910. But it was a pleasure to find when I came back to England in 1910 that no one had forgotten me, and I am proud to have had personal experience of the English loyalty so well known in Germany. It was sad to miss my old and valued friend Arthur Wilson-Fox, C.B., so early and

¹ It was published under the title *Entstehung und Rückgang des landwirtschaftlichen Grossbetriebs in England*, by Julius Springer, Berlin. I owe my thanks to Messrs Springer for giving their consent to the translation.

suddenly carried off by death from his work for rural England. I would offer my special thanks for the trouble they have taken on behalf of myself and my work to Mr Henry Rew, Major P. G. Craigie and Mr L. J. Cheney of the Board of Agriculture ; to Mr R. A. Yerrburgh, M.P., Mr H. W. Wolff and Mr J. Nugent Harris of the Agricultural Organisation Society ; to the Earl of Ancaster, Mr G. E. Lloyd-Baker, Lord Brassey and Mr H. C. Fairfax-Cholmeley among landowners ; and among gentlemen who have helped me in the most friendly way by information of various kinds, to Mr E. O. Fordham, Mr Montagu Fordham, Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., Mr Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., Mr G. P. Gooch, and Sir F. A. Channing.

The title may seem to be somewhat too comprehensive, and to go beyond what is actually the chief point contained in the material utilised in the book. But I would plead in its justification that there are unfortunately no English works treating of the history and organisation of agriculture as they are treated in the German systems of *Agrar-Politik* : and that though the proper subject of the present volume is the economics of large and small holdings, I have so often had occasion to go outside its strict limits that it seemed desirable to indicate the fact in the title. My intention, however, was to work out this special problem of agricultural economy on the broadest possible lines. For the history of the developments in regard of the unit of agricultural holding in England during the last hundred and fifty years can only be understood when looked at upon the background of the whole contemporary agricultural situation ; and a clear statement of the question as it stands at the present day can only be made when every important fact of rural life in modern England has been taken into consideration.

HERMANN LEVY

HEIDELBERG

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Journal R. A. S.=Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England.

Report of 1881=Report of the Royal Commission on the Depressed Condition of the Agricultural Interest, 1880-2.

Small Holdings Report, 1889=Report from the Select Committee on Small Holdings, 1889.

Report of 1894=First (Second, etc.) Report of the Royal Commission on the subject of Agricultural Depression, 1894-7.

Final Report=Final Report of the Royal Commission on the subject of Agricultural Depression, 1894-7.

Small Holdings Report, 1906=Report of the Departmental Committee appointed by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to enquire into the subject of Small Holdings in Great Britain, 1906.

PART I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LARGE FARM SYSTEM

INTRODUCTORY

THE question as to the best unit of agricultural management has been of increasing importance in England for the last twenty years. Up to about 1880 it seemed that the last word on the matter had already been spoken. The system of the large farm had made continual progress ever since the middle of the eighteenth century. It was held to be the characteristic, and in fact the only appropriate, method of English agriculture. It had been preached with enthusiasm by the agricultural authorities of the eighteenth century, and those of the nineteenth had taken over and developed the same doctrine. Moreover, throughout the whole period from 1750 to 1880 the doctrine seemed to be entirely justified by the facts of agricultural development. Even as late as between 1850 and 1880 large farms proved to be increasing at the expense of small farms. So that from the point of view of economic policy the superiority of the large holding, so far as regarded English agriculture, seemed to be a fact which there was little, if any, inclination to dispute.

Nor did the matter look very different from the point of view of social policy. The large farm certainly did not offer any obvious socio-political advantages. But those who depreciated it as compared with the small holding found that their arguments sank into insignificance beside the actual facts of agricultural management. The economic and technical superiorities of the large farm outweighed all that could be advanced in favour of the smaller unit.

From about 1880 onwards these conditions were altered. Large farms no longer increased in number; they rather decreased. On

the other hand it began to be evident that small and medium holdings were on the increase. Soon the dogma of the infallibility of the system of the large farm ceased to be altogether convincing. The whole economic theory of the unit of management, which had culminated in the glorification of the large farm, was upset. The astonishing change of tendency began to be investigated, and in many cases small farming, in view of the new conditions, was praised as vehemently as large farming had been before. Meantime those who had always regarded the matter as one of social policy saw that their day had come. Now that they could base their argument on the increasing capacity for economic survival shown by the small farm, they were able to obtain a hearing when they pointed out its socio-political superiority.

Thus new life was given to the somewhat arid discussion as to the proper size of the agricultural holding. Into this discussion, however, the present enquiry does not profess to enter. For what has been shown by the discussion, not only in England but also elsewhere, is the necessity for a historical study of the question. Just as formerly the case for the large farm was one-sidedly maintained because men allowed themselves to be dazzled by the facts that were before their eyes, so now the small holding is often championed with equal one-sidedness, because deductions are drawn as to general laws from impressions given by present conditions.

The changes, and the causes of the changes, in English systems of land management can only be understood if the history of agriculture is studied, so as to show how modern conditions have come into existence. The first step in this direction is to describe the conditions which brought about the development and preponderance of the large holding in England. Although, as has been seen, the system of the large farm has ceased to extend its boundaries, it is still predominant in English agriculture: England is still a country of large farms. Of the total acreage under cultivation, 42 per cent. is in holdings of 100 to 300 acres, 30 per cent. is in holdings of 300 to over 1000 acres, and only 28 per cent. in holdings of 1 to 100 acres. Our problem is to explain this preponderance of large and medium holdings. The key to the problem will be found in the agricultural history of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER I

THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND THE PERIOD OF THE CONTINENTAL SYSTEM

LONG before the eighteenth century there had been a period when large farms were formed in great numbers, namely in the middle of the fifteenth century, when the growing profits of sheep-breeding led landlords to buy up small peasant properties and throw them together into a few large farms. But it would be a mistake to suppose that it was at this period that the modern system of the large farm originated. The large holdings then formed were of quite a different kind from those of the nineteenth century and the present day. They were pasture-farms serving for sheep-breeding and the production of wool. The origin of the modern large farm is to be traced to the time when corn-growing flourished. On it were worked out the great modern improvements in the art of corn-cultivation. It is even doubtful whether the large farms of the fifteenth century were not transformed again into small holdings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which certainly saw a reaction in favour of small farming¹.

At any rate it is clear that in the first half of the eighteenth century there still remained a great number of small and very small holdings. Moreover when in the second half of the century the rapid consolidation of small holdings into large farms began, the indignation which broke out and the importance ascribed to the movement point to the conclusion that till that time no tendency to increase the size of farms had been noticeable.

These small holdings of the eighteenth century were of various classes. In the first place we have very small plots, some of whose holders were also owners, some tenants of a landlord or sub-tenants under a farmer. In any case they were for the most part labourers as well as occupiers; working for such neighbouring larger farmers as might at times need the services of day-labourers to supplement the

¹ J. Rae, *Why have the Yeomanry perished?* in *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLIV, 1883, p. 94.

work of their farm-servants. They had before them good hope of rising by industry and thrift to the position of a small farmer properly so called¹. The disappearance of this class of landholding day-labourers is a constant subject of complaint with the social reformers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries².

The next class of small cultivators was that of the small farmer proper, which was still a numerous one in the eighteenth century. The whole time of the small farmer and his family was given to the cultivation of his own holding, and the sale of its produce was their sole source of income.

Very close to these little farmers stood the small proprietors, the honest, industrious yeomanry whose disappearance is still lamented by students of agricultural life³. Dr Rae has clearly shown that a large number of them still existed in the middle of the eighteenth century⁴. How they came to lose their land will be seen later. As a rule this class too employed little outside labour, and very little day-labour. They themselves did the work of the farm with the assistance of their own families. Their holdings would seldom exceed 100 acres. Their yearly income in Cumberland, the classic country of the small owner, ranged from £5 to £50⁵.

All these three classes were alike in one point; they all had some rights of common. The smallest occupiers profited most by these. They drove their stock on the common pasture⁶, and gathered wood and furze on the common and waste⁷; so that to them their common rights were a very important privilege.

Agricultural writers of the second half of the eighteenth century give some data as to the commodities produced and sent to market by these small cultivators.

The holders of the smallest plots practically never sold corn. They themselves consumed what amount they grew, which was seldom sufficient even to cover their own demand for bread. Their

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Women and Children, 1868* § 251.

² E.g. David Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry, 1795*, p. 56; and *The Labourers' Friend, 1835*, p. 3.

³ G. F. Eyre, *Small Farming, Oxford, 1902*, p. 18.

⁴ Cp. Rae, loc. cit. pp. 546 ff.

⁵ R. H. L. Palgrave, *Dict. of Political Economy, 1899*, p. 685 a; and G. C. Brodrick, *English Land and English Landlords, 1881*, p. 20.

⁶ W. Hasbach, *English Agricultural Labourer, 1908*, pp. 89 ff. and 150 ff.; and R. Prothero, *Pioneers and Progress of English Farming, 1888*, passim.

⁷ *Report on the Employment of Women and Children, 1868*, loc. cit.

pigs and cows were also often destined only to supply their own tables with meat and milk¹. Whatever else they needed was paid for out of the wages they earned when working outside their own holdings. Anything which they did produce over and above what they consumed themselves consisted in live-stock or its products. Some of them kept two or three cows, two or three pigs, geese and poultry, "according as they may have had success²."

The other small holders too, whether proprietors or farmers, had for their main object the production not of corn but of live-stock. It is very difficult to tell on what sized holding, at that time, the production of corn for the market began. Arthur Young, in 1772, describes the production on a small holding of twelve acres as follows³. Enough wheat would be grown to provide the family with bread-corn for the year. The surplus produce, which would come to market, would be (1) in the first place dairy produce; (2) an acre of barley, assuming that the occupier fed no pigs; (3) the sow's annual litter, say ten on the average, of which eight would be sold; (4) two acres of turnips or pease; and (5) the poultry that were reared. But corn-growing was not a prominent feature even on such small holdings as did send a little to market, either habitually or after a specially good harvest. Even the most impassioned defenders of the little cultivators did not attempt to claim this for them. On the contrary, some of them admit that as a consequence of the large families of the small holders and their often imperfect methods of cultivation, only a very small quantity of that important article was sold by them⁴. But they go on to point out the branches of production in which the small holdings did excel: from them came quantities of beef and mutton, pigs and poultry, fruit and vegetables, eggs, butter and milk⁵.

¹ Stephen Addington, *An Enquiry into the Reasons for and against enclosing Open Fields*, 2nd ed. Coventry, 1772, p. 33:—"Their land furnishes them with wheat and barley for bread, and in many places with beans or peas to feed a hog or two for meat; with the straw they thatch their cottage, and winter their cow, which gives a breakfast and supper of milk, nine or ten months in the year, for their families."

² *A Political Enquiry into the Consequences of enclosing Waste Lands*, 1785, p. 44.

³ *Political Essays*, 1772, pp. 88 f.

⁴ J. Donaldson, *Modern Agriculture*, Edinburgh, 1795, Vol. 1, p. 408.

⁵ F. Forbes, *The Improvement of Waste Lands*, 1778, p. 153:—"The occupiers of small and middling farms keep cows upon each of them, which enables them to keep hogs in proportion; young store also and poultry; and hence the markets and neighbourhood are supplied with butter, cheese, milk, pigs, veal, fowls and eggs." See also J. Duncumb, *A General View of the Agriculture of Herefordshire*, 1805, p. 34:—"If they (the small farmers) supplied the public markets with so much less corn as the increased demand of their families required, they made amends in an increased supply of veal, lamb, poultry and butter."

Other representatives of the same side say nothing at all about corn-growing, but they too dwell on the live-stock of the small farms and their success in the lesser branches of agricultural production¹. It thus appears that Arthur Young and other champions of the spreading system of the large farm were justified in describing the corn-growing on the small holdings as behind the times. Instead of contradicting them, their opponents point to the superiority of the small farmer over the large in the production of vegetables, butter, milk, pigs, poultry, fruit and so forth. Even at that time, therefore, these products were the domain of the small cultivator; and even in the eighteenth century the products of large and small farming were seen to differ. The large farmers neglected both live-stock and the smaller matters of agriculture in favour of corn-growing. The writers of the period frequently note that the farmer's interest in corn-growing increases as the size of his farm increases, while on large holdings all other branches of production, with the possible exception of sheep-breeding, are neglected².

The care demanded by live-stock and the lesser matters which occupied the attention of the small holders seemed to the large farmer to be troublesome and not very profitable³. The work on an arable farm could be done by day-labourers with superintendence only on the part of the occupier. Live-stock and market-gardening required intensive work, and care and attention such as could not be obtained from hired labour, but which the small cultivator and his family bestowed to admiration⁴. This was not only claimed by the friends of small farming. Even Arthur Young, who had as a rule so little to say in its favour, was astonished and delighted by the energy of the Lincolnshire peasants, who, as he said, "turned sand into gold⁵."

The care bestowed by the cottagers on their cows was always an object of special commendation. They were in the stable till late at

¹ Nathaniel Kent, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property*, 1775, p. 112. Also J. S. Girdler, *Observations on the Pernicious Consequences of Forestalling, Regraving and Engrassing*, 1800, p. 42. The author speaks of men who possess "little farms," or sometimes only "cottages with small enclosures," "who gain a livelihood and support large families by selling their sweet little mutton, and their calves, pork, pigs, geese, and other poultry; butter, and eggs." Nothing is said of their growing any corn.

² See e.g. Th. Wright, *A Short Address to the Public on the Monopoly of Small Farms*, 1795, p. 6:—"The wealthy farmer's attention is engrossed by the means of producing the greatest quantity of grain and hay."

³ Cp. e.g. *Sketch of a Plan for reducing the present High Price of Corn*, 1772, p. 16; and Adam, *Practical Essays on Agriculture*, 1789, Vol. II, p. 510.

⁴ Forbes, op. cit. p. 157; and Kent, op. cit. p. 214.

⁵ Young, *A General View of the Agricultures of Lincolnshire*, 1799, pp. 17 ff.

night, and so succeeded in making profits out of a branch of farming which appeared to bring little advantage when pursued on a large scale¹.

Later, as the small cultivators disappeared, writers frequently noticed that the large farmer simply would not be troubled with trifles like butter, poultry and so forth, and that his wife was much too fine to go to market, like the wife of the small farmer, "with a basket of butter, pork, roasting-pigs, or poultry, on her arm²."

It was, in fact, not only in the production of meat and the lesser agricultural products that the intensive interest bestowed on the work by the little farmer or cottager seemed to give their holdings the advantage over large farms worked by wage-labour. It was also, and more particularly, in the marketing of such products. Here the wives and daughters of the little landholders played a great part. They themselves took the goods to market, or to their private customers, and their personal business knowledge and interest was a great factor in determining the prices they obtained. The wife of the large farmer was by no means inclined to go to market in person, much less to go round to customers' houses: and the business could hardly be entrusted to the maid-servants³. So that here was another reason why the large farmer was disinclined to trouble himself with dairy produce and the like, which he could not sell off once and for all as he could his corn. It would however be a mistake to suppose that the small farmers of the eighteenth century had produced only for the local market. In spite of the unfavourable transport conditions, it can be shown that in the eighteenth century (though it is true that the authorities belong to the second half of the century) meat, dairy produce and fruit and vegetables were all produced for central markets. Thus Forbes, in 1778, states that to London and other large towns "provisions are drawn from all parts of the country⁴." So, for example, London drew its butter mainly from Yorkshire,

¹ So e.g. T. Comber, *Real Improvement in Agriculture*, 1772, p. 40.

² Girdler, *op. cit.* p. 29.

³ One writer says that the wives of the small cultivators regarded the poultry and other lesser branches of production as entirely their concern. See *A Sketch of a Plan*, etc. p. 16. So also C. Vancouver, *A General View of the Agriculture of Devonshire*, 1808, p. 112:—"It is but common justice to say, that the industry and attention to business of the farmers' wives and daughters, with the neatness displayed in all their market-ware, at Exeter and in other large towns, are subjects deserving the highest praise. No labour or fatigue is spared in reaching the market in time, be the distance what it may; nor will any severity of weather prevent them from their ordinary attendance." And Kent, *op. cit.* p. 213:—"His (the large farmer's) wife...will not condescend to attend the market like the wives, and children, of little farmers."

⁴ Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 153.

Dorsetshire and Ireland; only a small proportion was supplied by Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex¹. London was the great market for poultry. Turkeys came to it from Suffolk, geese from Lincolnshire, etc.² Butter was sent in tubs weighing 56 lbs. from the small farms of Cumberland to far distant counties³. Westmorland, Durham, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire and other counties contributed to supply Lancashire with beef and mutton⁴. Gloucestershire sent fat oxen, sheep, pigs and cheese to London⁵. There was even a certain division of labour as between the various counties. Thus Kent, the garden of England, even then supplied the northern counties with fruit⁶. Cheshire sent large quantities of its cheese to London⁷. London's demand for eggs, which even then is described as being very large, was not supplied by the neighbouring counties, but by some of those at a distance⁸.

Thus it appears that the means of transport were sufficiently good to open up central as well as local markets to the agriculturists. The improvements made in the roads⁹, and the extension of the network of canals¹⁰, in the course of the century, of course contributed to this end.

With the rapid increase of population from the beginning of the century¹¹, the increasing wealth of the various classes and the improving means of communication, the profits of the small holders seemed secure.

Corn prices, in the first half of the century, were low. In the period 1692 to 1715 the average price of wheat, according to the Eton tables, was 45s. 8d. In the next fifty years it was only 34s. 11d.¹²

¹ J. Middleton, *A General View of the Agriculture of Middlesex*, 1798, p. 527.

² Donaldson, *op. cit.* Vol. II, pp. 150 ff.

³ J. Bailey and G. Culley, *A General View of the Agriculture of Northumberland*, 3rd ed. 1813, p. 244.

⁴ Hasbach, *op. cit.* p. 54.

⁵ T. Rudge, *A General View of the Agriculture of Gloucestershire*, 1807, p. 370.

⁶ Bailey and Culley, *op. cit.* p. 123.

⁷ H. Holland, *A General View of the Agriculture of Cheshire*, 1808, p. 343.

⁸ Donaldson, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 150.

⁹ Forbes, *op. cit.* pp. 153 f.

¹⁰ The importance of the canal system, and of shipping generally, for the transport of agricultural produce to the great markets, increased extraordinarily in the eighteenth century. Cp. Arthur Young's admiring words in *A Six Weeks' Tour through the Southern Counties*, Dublin, 1768, p. 229; and also Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 154. For the extension of the canal system in the eighteenth century see H. G. Thompson, *The Canal System of England*, 1902, pp. 8-10.

¹¹ The population increased from 5,400,000 in the year 1700 to 8,600,000 in 1790.

¹² Tooke, *History of Prices*, Vol. I, p. 39.

Bread, accordingly, was cheap. Meantime, while this most important article of consumption¹ was at a low price, wages were rising considerably. Whereas from 1660 to 1720 a day's wage would on the average buy $\frac{2}{3}$ of a peck of wheat, from 1720 to 1750 the fall of price and rise of wage were such that a day's wage would purchase a whole peck². This increased purchasing power of wages would naturally mean an increased consumption of agricultural produce on the part of the working classes; and in fact the social reformers of the end of the century show that it was not only the upper classes who had increased their consumption of meat, butter, eggs and poultry at this period, by their complaint that now, in face of the rise in the price of corn, labourers could no longer afford such articles. The complaints would have no point if the people had not formerly, at the time when corn was cheap, been accustomed to make these animal products an important part of their consumption.

Thus it is very natural that nothing should be heard as to difficulties of the small farmers in the first half of the eighteenth century. The conditions of the market were favourable for their produce. And the smallest holders, who worked outside their own holdings and did not grow corn enough for their own needs, had the advantage of a high wage, while the price of bread was lower than it had ever been before.

The large farmers, whose chief business as a rule was the sale of corn, found their position less satisfactory. This was obviously the result of the fall in the price of corn as compared with the end of the seventeenth century. It was the old story, and one which was often to be heard again. High prices had led to the breaking-up of land hitherto unploughed, and rents had risen. Then, when with good harvests prices fell, the farmers were unable to continue to pay the rents based on the higher prices. Hence between 1715 and 1765 there were frequent complaints from them of distress and from the landlords of the fall of rents which they had to endure. From 1731 to 1733 and again in the years just after 1740 these complaints are particularly audible. But they always concern only corn-growing and the arable farmer³.

¹ Wheaten bread became the most important article of food in the dietary of the labouring classes during this period; cp. the authorities cited by Tooke, op. cit. p. 60; and also M. Peters, *The Rational Farmer*, 2nd ed. 1771, p. 118.

² Tooke, op. cit. p. 61. On the rise of wages along with falling corn-prices cp. Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 2nd ed. 1817, Vol. I, p. 333; and Thorold Rogers, *Work and Wages*, 1885, p. 121.

³ The causes of agricultural distress at this time may be clearly traced in various publica-

It is natural, again, that under these circumstances there was no question, up to about the year 1765, of any consolidation of small farms. Large farmers who grew corn were not as a rule in any serious distress, but the periods of specially low prices sufficed to prevent any great extension of the area under corn and any general increase in the size of holdings. Although a little later Arthur Young expatiated on the satisfactory results of William III's bounty on export¹, he only did so because he was desirous of showing that State action could help to keep up prices. Certainly the price of wheat would have fallen still lower if the home market had not been relieved by the export of corn in years of plenty. But even the artificially high price induced by the bounty was too low to bring about any real increase of arable farming, improvement of poor land and the like. Arthur Young himself said in 1774 that he had every reason to believe that agriculture (by which he always means corn-growing) had made practically no progress in the cheap years 1730 to 1756².

But a radical change in all these conditions took place in the second half of the eighteenth century. From about the year 1765 to the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 prices rose almost unceasingly, and more especially the price of those particular commodities whose cheapness in the first half of the eighteenth century had proved so beneficial to the mass of the population, namely the prices of corn and of bread. From 34s. 11d. in the period 1715 to 1765 the price of wheat rose to 45s. 7d. in the period 1760 to 1790, and to 55s. 11d. in the following decade. From 1805 to 1813 the annual average price was never below 73s., and often over 100s. In 1812 it reached 122s. 8d.³

The causes of this great and constantly increasing rise were various. In the first place, the fifty years up to 1765 had been a period of extraordinarily good harvests. According to Tooke, in all that time there were only five bad years⁴. With the year 1765 this

tions. Thus W. Allen, in *The Landlord's Companion*, 1742, p. 13, says that in the prosperous times woodlands and sheep-walks had been turned into ploughland. These would naturally become unprofitable again when prices fell. And even the bounty on export did not prevent this distress, since it was never able to keep the price of wheat at the level which would have been necessary to meet the increased rents of the arable farms. Cp. further on this particular point W. Ellis, *The Modern Husbandman, Month of December*, 1743, pp. 96-7 and 98-111. Also Tooke, op. cit. pp. 27, 46, 52, and Vol. VI, p. 383-4; and Rogers, op. cit. p. 121.

¹ Arthur Young, *Political Arithmetic*, 1774, pp. 29 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³ G. R. Porter, *Progress of the Nation*, 1851, p. 148.

⁴ Tooke, op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 39 f.

period of abundance came to an end. Between that year and 1791 there were very few really good harvests¹. In the second place, while the home production of wheat was thus decreasing, population was increasing. As a natural consequence, England passed soon after 1750 from the position of a corn-exporting to that of a corn-importing country. But even increasing imports could not reduce the price to the low level of the first half of the century, in view of the growing demand and the lessened home supply. On the contrary, it rose higher and higher. Conditions became still more unfavourable with the outbreak of the French war in 1793. In the period which followed (1792 to 1813) the harvests were quite extraordinarily bad², while population was still increasing rapidly, viz. by 3,000,000 persons in the twenty years 1790 to 1811. These two circumstances by themselves would have sufficed to drive up corn-prices, but further the wars, and above all Napoleon's Continental System, hindered and even prevented the necessary regular importation of corn. While an import of about 1½ million quarters in 1801 had not been sufficient to stave off dearth and starvation, between 1806 and 1813 the imports never exceeded 400,000 quarters, though the home harvests were most unfavourable³. This conjunction of bad seasons, inadequate imports and rapidly growing population seems fully sufficient to explain the rise in prices.

The effect of the rise on the mass of the people was terrible. After the good times they had enjoyed in the period of abundance they now found themselves plunged into misery, privation and famine. The increase of population seemed to be a curse. All the progress made in the first half of the eighteenth century was lost again. The very word "labourers" was almost universally replaced by the term "labouring poor."

The deterioration in the position of the working classes is especially traceable in the decrease in the purchasing power of wages. It is true that wages did rise with the rise in corn-prices. But that rise was insignificant in face of the fact that the price of provisions generally had risen in a much greater proportion. The nominal wage did indeed increase, but real wages fell lower and lower. Thus according to the figures given by various authorities, the wages of the agricultural labourer rose between 1760 and 1813 by 60 per cent.,

¹ Tooke, *op. cit.* pp. 50, 81 f.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 84 f., 179 ff., 258 ff., 293 ff.

³ *Reports respecting Grain and the Corn Laws*, November 1814, p. 121.

whereas the price of wheat rose by 130 per cent.¹ This inadequate rise of wages led, as is well known, to the introduction of the allowance system, by which the parish bound itself to make up from the poor-rate the amount by which a labourer's wages might fall short of what was necessary to his existence. Wages-scales were established, which regulated the necessary income according to the price of bread². If the labourer did not earn the ideal wage thus fixed, the "allowance" made up the deficiency. The extent of the claims on this allowance in the period of rising corn-prices is shown by the enormous increase in the poor-rate in the years 1801 to 1811³.

Under these conditions the lot of the labouring classes became worse with every decade. The extensive enquiries of Sir Frederick Eden showed how miserable their condition was even as early as 1795⁴. There was universal complaint of the inadequate rise of wages in face of the exorbitant price of bread⁵, not only in regard of industrial workers, or workers in the towns, but also in regard of the agricultural labourers. Even the landed interest, which is seldom in the course of history found objecting to low wages, was obliged to recognise the seriousness of the fall in their purchasing power. Arthur Young, strongest of representatives of this class, admits it⁶. He did not, however, admit that it was a disadvantage. He took the view that low wages meant more work done, and that therefore the deterioration in the position of the agricultural labourer was rather good than bad. Another writer justified the fall of real wages by saying that "the present high price of wheat being, it is hoped, only temporary,...an advance of wages in the above proportion would

¹ For further particulars see H. Levy, *Die Not der englischen Landwirte zur Zeit der hohen Getreidesölle*, Stuttgart, 1902, p. 28. In addition to the authorities there quoted see C. D. Brereton, *Observations on the Administration of the Poor Laws*, 3rd ed. p. 77.

² Cp. Levy, op. cit. p. 27.

³ Porter, op. cit. p. 90. The poor-rate rose in these ten years by about £2½ millions.

⁴ Sir F. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 1797. See Vol. I, p. 404 and passim.

⁵ E.g. N. Kent, *A General View of the Agriculture of Norfolk*, Norwich, 1796, p. 173. In 1801, when wheat was at 110s. 5d. per quarter, the Rev. A. Jobson wrote in the *Annals of Agriculture*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 33:—"Some farmers now pay their labourers only 9s. a week; some pay 10s. 6d., which is the common rate; and some few farmers allow 12s. per week. Even the 12s. are found insufficient to provide bread for a small and numerous family."

⁶ Young, *The Farmer's Letters to the People of England*, 1771, Vol. I, p. 204:—"Some years ago they could buy bread...much cheaper than they can at present, while their earnings were the same." Cp. also Sir Spencer Walpole, *History of England*, ed. of 1902, Vol. I, p. 157; and Duncumb, *Herefordshire*, p. 136, and pp. 155 f., where Duncumb expresses a desire to see a law passed similar to the statute of Richard II which regulated wages according to the price of bread.

emancipate the labourer from feeling those effects at all, which everyone ought to bear his share of¹." As though dearth and a rise in the price of necessaries had not always hit the labourer harder than any other class!

It is evident that, as might have been supposed, real wages having fallen, the diet of the great mass of the people was changed for the worse. Even by 1773 veal, lamb, bacon and pork, poultry, butter and eggs could be described as "dainties" or "delicacies"². But the impossibility of any longer obtaining such provisions was not the worst which the labourer had to endure. Although even by working his hardest he was often unable to earn enough to provide himself and his family with bread³, the attempt was made forcibly to limit his use even of this. Whereas in the course of the first sixty-five years of the eighteenth century the use of the more nourishing wheaten bread had been substituted for that of black bread, the aim now was to use anything else possible in the place of wheat⁴. The most various means occurred to people as serving this end. Most usually beans, barley or rice were mixed with wheat flour so as to form a pudding, or rice-bread was substituted for the wheaten-bread which had now become a luxury⁵. In some cases, for lack of bread, labourers had to content themselves with raw peas for their dinner⁶. Meantime, although the dearness of corn meant poverty and misery to the people generally, the growers of corn found their wealth increasing rapidly from 1760 onwards.

Corn-growing, as prices rose, became a main object of the agriculturist. The profitableness of land under wheat increased with every shilling by which the price of the quarter increased.

On the other hand the profitableness of live-stock and dairy and garden produce was decreasing. The mass of the people became less and less able to buy meat, butter, cheese, poultry, or fruit; their consumption of these commodities had to be diminished in proportion as the price of bread rose and wages failed to rise correspondingly.

¹ W. Pitt, *A General View of the Agriculture of Staffordshire*, 1796, p. 158.

² (J. Arbuthnot), *An Enquiry into the Connection between the present Price of Provisions and the Size of Farms*, 1773, pp. 18, 19.

³ Duncumb, *op. cit.* p. 137.

⁴ *Annals of Agriculture*, Vol. XXXV, 1800, p. 205:—"I have much pleasure in informing you that a great number of gentlemen, tradesmen and others in this country have adopted the plan of having no bread consumed at one meal in the day in their families; and have also begun to use one-third barley, and even that with the utmost economy."

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19 ff., 54, and 37 ff. Cp. also Vol. XXXIV, p. 440.

⁶ W. Marshall, *Rural Economy of the Midland Counties*, 1790, Vol. II, pp. 217-8.

It was no wonder that as the profitableness of these branches of farming decreased corn-growing gained in importance. As early as 1778 Forbes wrote of the "universal passion for cultivating wheat¹," and Arthur Young thought it exceptional to meet, when on his tours, a few farmers who preferred to take pasture-land rather than arable².

Wherever possible the attempt was made to give up the now unprofitable pasture-farming in favour of corn-growing. A period began in which the most beautiful pastures were broken up for plough-land, even if they would only produce the smallest results under wheat³. Land which was entirely unsuitable for corn, but had made the most excellent pasture, was turned into arable in view of the price obtainable for wheat⁴. The profits resulting from the growth of corn, says a writer in 1780, "were so great and so immediate, to landlord as well as tenant, that every other species of produce was not only diminished, but as it were sacrificed, to the design of reaping the superior advantages resulting from the increase of this commodity. For this purpose the farmer converted every nook and corner of his land into arable; and even the cottager forsook his one little ewe lamb, and turned his scanty orchard into tillage⁵." The gains made by the change were enormous. It was said that individual farmers often made as much as £18,000 to £20,000 in

¹ Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 185.

² *Annals of Agriculture*, Vol. XXVIII, 1797, p. 631.

³ Cp. J. Wimpey, *Thoughts on Several Interesting Subjects*, 1770, p. 38:—"Tis allowed on all hands, the passion for converting pastures and meadows into tillage lands never ran so high as of late." Also M. Peters, *Agricultura*, 1776, p. 172:—"The present passion is all for tillage and to explode pasture." Arthur Young stated before a Select Committee of the House of Commons (*Report relating to the Corn Laws*, July 1814, p. 86):—"In the cow district of Suffolk, which is extensive, where ten cows were kept thirty years ago, there is not now more than one. The high price of corn has set the plough to work in every farm, and I have seen the same thing in other parts of the kingdom: whilst the price of corn was high no lease was treated for without a petition from the tenant to break up grass-land." See also *Farmer's Letters*, p. 137.

⁴ H. E. Strickland, *A General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding of Yorkshire*, York, 1812, p. 105:—"On the Wolds, a country peculiarly adapted to sheep, and from various circumstances unfavourable to corn, particularly to wheat, a stranger would be surprised to see at this time at least two-thirds of the land under the plough." And p. 106:—"Unfortunately those beautiful sheep-walks and pastures, which the catage of so many ages had rendered verdant and fertile beyond any to be met with on the other downs or heaths of the kingdom, held out an irresistible temptation to modern avarice, and under the plea of improvement they have been ploughed out."

⁵ *An Enquiry into the Advantages and Disadvantages resulting from the Bills of Enclosure*, 1780, p. 23. Arthur Young reports similarly of the very small farmers in Oxfordshire. See *A General View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, 1809, p. 23.

a short time¹. The transformation of the grass-land was often carried out in the roughest way², in spite of the admirable instructions which were constantly being published both by the Board of Agriculture³ and by private authorities⁴. The profits to be made out of the sudden boom in wheat prevented farmers from thinking of improving their land with a view to its future fertility⁵. The bad harvests, aided by the limitation of imports due to the war, ensured them enormous net profits. For Gregory King's law, that bad harvests raise prices to a greater extent than is accounted for by the actual shortage, was clearly justified at this time. Even the landed interest admitted that it was in the years of bad harvest that they made most money out of their corn⁶.

The one-sided extension of arable at the expense of all other branches of farming in the period from 1760 to 1813 is evident from the writings of the chief contemporary agricultural authors. Their own ideal was a combination of arable and pasture-farming, an improved three-field system, with a more intensive rotation of crops, and above all a great increase in the cultivation of turnips for feeding purposes. But all these improvements presupposed that agriculturists would find it profitable to increase their live-stock, as in fact later on feeding-crops were increased when pasture-farming began to flourish. At this period the case was otherwise.

The growing profits obtainable from corn, and the worsening of the market for animal produce, led to deterioration rather than progress in pasture-farming. This is a constant complaint with writers on agriculture⁷. But the neglect of this branch of farming

¹ St John Priest, *A General View of the Agriculture of Buckinghamshire*, 1813, p. 249.

² *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, Vol. IX (1849), p. 96.

³ Cp. Vol. III of the *Communications* to the Board of Agriculture, 1802, passim.

⁴ E.g. N. Bartley, *Some Cursory Observations on the Conversion of Pasture into Tillage*, Bath, 1802.

⁵ T. Davis, *A General View of the Agriculture of Wiltshire*, 1813, p. 156:—"The temptation of immediate profit is frequently too strong to allow them to look forward to future consequences, and more particularly those who know that they shall soon quit their farms."

⁶ W. Pitt, *A General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, 1809, p. 53:—"In twenty-four years' experience, upon a considerable scale, I always made the most money in difficult seasons."

⁷ R. Brown, *Treatise on Rural Affairs*, Edinburgh, 1811, Vol. II, p. 202:—"Though horses, neat cattle, sheep, and swine, are of equal importance to the British Farmer with corn crops, yet we have few treatises concerning these animals, compared with the immense number that have been written on the management of arable land or the crops produced upon it. Whether this difference of attention proceeds from an erroneous preference for the plough...we shall not stop to determine." Cp. also A. Thaer, *Der praktische Ackerbau von R. W. Dickson*, Berlin, 1807, pp. xxi f.

was not to be prevented by the theoretical considerations adduced to prove the technical superiority of a combination of pasture and arable. Arthur Young wrote as early as 1771 that no doubt his views as to the advantages of pasture-farming would meet with much opposition, as corn-growing was generally held to be more profitable¹. And in 1808 his son wrote: "A new turn has everywhere been given to the face of the country. The return is speedy and certain in tillage; in live-stock it is distant and uncertain²."

Thus from 1760 onwards serious changes were in progress in the conditions of sale and production of agricultural commodities. These changes were the causes which led to great changes in the customary unit of agricultural management.

Precisely at the time when the rise in corn-prices began, mention begins to be made of the enlargement of holdings, or, as it was called, "the engrossing of farms." It is noticed in a pamphlet of 1764³; and in another of 1766 we are told that it has already "become a common practice with the landed gentlemen, in every part of the kingdom, to throw several estates together, to make capital farms; or for several landholders to let estates, which lie near together, to one man⁴." From this time forward there is hardly any publication dealing with agriculture which does not contain some discussion on the subject of the engrossing of farms, the swallowing up of the little holdings by the larger, and the like. In 1776 Peters said that "the growing evil of engrossing farms is spreading itself every day," and that even those farmers who already held three or four farms were not yet satisfied with the extent of their land; the "modern farmer" was not content with a hundred or two hundred acres. Nothing less than a thousand would satisfy him⁵.

The passion for large farms, however, did not reach its height till early in the nineteenth century, when the small holdings disappeared in hundreds to be replaced by large ones⁶. In numbers of villages twenty, thirty, and even forty or fifty farms were absorbed by one

¹ *Farmer's Letters*, Vol. 1, pp. 136 ff.

² Arthur Young, junior, *A General View of the Agriculture of Sussex*, 1808, p. 226.

³ *Considerations on the Present High Price of Provisions and the Necessaries of Life*, 1764, p. 7.

⁴ *Two Letters on the Flour Trade and Dearness of Corn*, 1766, p. 19.

⁵ Peters, *Agricultura*, p. 176, also p. xvi.

⁶ Adam Murray, *A General View of the Agriculture of Warwickshire*, 1813, p. 33:—"There appears to be a disposition among the landlords, when the small farms fall in, to increase them in size, by laying two or three of them together"; and Duncumb, *op. cit.* p. 33:—"Of late years the practice of consolidating several estates in one, has much reduced the number of small farms."

or two large farmers and thrown together into large holdings¹. The small plots of the cottagers and little farmers, holdings of from one to eight acres or so, on which their occupiers had mostly raised live-stock and dairy produce, practically vanished altogether in the course of the Napoleonic wars. "Such was the competition for land during the war," wrote Perry in 1846, "and such the disposition of the landowners to blot out the existence of small farms...that in a few years nearly the last vestige of these small holdings had disappeared²."

The rise in wheat-prices was severely felt by the small holders, who had sent little of their produce to market, and had been for the most part accustomed to buy corn. The bad seasons affected their own crops; they needed to buy larger quantities than before, and meantime the price was constantly increasing. Others, who had previously grown sufficient for their own needs, found themselves, in consequence of the same bad seasons, obliged to buy³. In these years of scarcity the small farmers who had corn to sell were the exception; most of them had not enough for themselves⁴. In 1772 Arthur Young had described a holding of twelve acres as sufficient to produce all the corn required by its occupier; in 1799, at the time of the worst harvests, he found that even in unusually fertile districts of Lincolnshire a holding of twenty acres was needed for the purpose⁵. There certainly were small farmers who held more than this, and who sold corn. But corn for the market was never more than a by-product of small farming: its main sphere lay, as has been shown, in pasture-farming and the lesser branches of agriculture.

Possibly if the profits on these branches of production had increased they might have compensated the little farmer for the loss consequent on the rise in corn-prices. But, as has been shown above, the market for meat, dairy produce, vegetables, etc. deteriorated in proportion as the price of corn and bread went up and the

¹ J. S. Girdler, *Observations on the Pernicious Consequences of Forestalling, Regrating and Engrossing*, 1800, p. 25. So also the *Report respecting Grain* of November 1814, p. 77.

² G. W. Perry, *The Peasantry of England*, 1846, p. 19; see also p. 20. Also *The Labourers' Friend*, loc. cit. pp. 2 and 3.

³ As early as 1760, Thos. Hitt points out that the high corn-prices did not only affect the consumers adversely, but also many farmers; *A Treatise of Husbandry*, 1760, p. 52:—"In wet years there are many tillers of land in the kingdom who have not only no corn to sell, but are necessitated to buy part of what they use in their houses for bread, beer, etc., also seed to sow their land with."

⁴ See the description given by Bailey and Culley, op. cit. p. 163.

⁵ Young, *Lincolnshire*, p. 17.

purchasing-power of the working-classes decreased. So that even where any small farmer had grain to sell he would find that the loss on his staple produce more than balanced the larger profit he made on his little quantity of corn.

In consequence, many even of the smallest holders attempted to extend their corn-production at the expense of their other, now less profitable, business. But such attempts could not save the small farm system. All they could do was to prove how little fitted the small holder was to compete with the large farmer in this sphere.

On the other hand many small holders were not in a position even to attempt to give up pasture-farming in favour of arable. More especially was it impossible for the cottier class, to whom their own holding was only a by-occupation, who returned from their day-labour late in the evening, and who therefore were quite unable to give the work required by plough-land. All they could do, and all they ever had done, on their little holdings, was to keep a cow or two, and some pigs and poultry, and for these their wives were mostly responsible¹. Nor was the transition to arable much easier for those little farmers who still held their land on the old common-field system. This, however, still ruled on a great part of the area under cultivation. Where the holdings had not been consolidated, on the so-called open fields, the traditional intermixture of strips, customary regulation of tillage and common rights of pasture were still in use. Naturally they hindered any improvement in the methods of agriculture, so that the unenclosed fields represented the worst of bad husbandry². Nor were they of any particular importance to the small holders, who were much more interested in the common pastures, where they drove their cattle, sheep and pigs. It was no one's business to improve the common fields, and the methods of cultivation remained the same year in and year out³. Of these the old three-field system was most usual, viz. a course of winter-corn, summer-corn, and fallow, with sometimes the substitution of a crop of beans in place of the fallow. Where this substitution was not made, the traditional common rights of pasture made the unenclosed fields useless to their owner every

¹ John Billingsley, *A General View of the Agriculture of Somersetshire*, Bath, 1798, p. 34:—"The wife undertakes the whole management of the cows, and the husband goes to daily labour."

² Cp. Kent, *op. cit.* p. 102; A. Young, *A General View of the Agriculture of Suffolk*, 1804, p. 9; W. Pearce, *A General View of the Agriculture of Berkshire*, 1794, p. 59; and Stone, *Suggestions*, pp. 11-21.

³ Donaldson, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, p. 329.

third or fourth year¹; whereas in the eighteenth century every well-educated and intelligent farmer had long since given up fallowing in favour of a proper rotation of crops with regular manuring. On the unenclosed fields turnip-crops could not be introduced, nor indeed any system which depended on the rotation of crops². Nor was drill-husbandry in use³, nor drainage⁴. Naturally, with such extensive methods of cultivation, the crops obtained were extremely poor⁵, whereas the cost of production was high, in consequence of the expense entailed by the system of intermixture. Farmers holding as much as 100 acres might have nowhere more than two or three acres lying together⁶. The whole system was only possible so long as no great importance was attributed to the earning of high profits on the corn-crops. That is to say that in the eighteenth century it was bound up with the small farm system⁷, in which not corn-growing but live-stock held the first place. The small farmers cared for the rights of common as enabling them to breed or to fatten a larger number of cows or poultry, while the corn grown on the open fields sufficed to cover their own needs. But when it became a question of getting large corn-crops and decreasing the live-stock kept, the old common-field system must have been felt as a serious handicap.

However, a considerable number of small farmers were able to follow the general tendency and to increase their production of corn. But it soon became evident that corn-growing was best done upon a large scale. Arthur Young and others showed that the large farmer needed fewer plough-horses or oxen in proportion than the small farmer⁸; and it was remarked that as a fact when several small farms were transformed into one large farm fewer beasts were

¹ *Second Report on the High Price of Provisions*, 1801, p. 135.

² Prothero, *op. cit.* p. 65.

³ Th. Stone, *An Essay on Agriculture*, Lynn, 1785, p. 61.

⁴ Prothero, *op. cit.* p. 66; J. Anderson, *A General View of the Agriculture of Aberdeenshire*, Edinburgh, 1794, p. 52.

⁵ Donaldson was of opinion that the perpetual corn-crops taken on the unenclosed fields made them incapable of producing any profitable crops at all, *op. cit.* p. 58. See also Kent, *op. cit.* p. 102.

⁶ Stone, *op. cit.* p. 58; and *Observations on a Pamphlet entitled an Enquiry into the Advantages and Disadvantages resulting from Bills of Enclosure*, Shrewsbury, 1781, p. 15.

⁷ Th. Robertson, *Outline of the General Report upon the Size of Farms*, Edinburgh, 1796, p. 38:—"The common fields, which are so frequent and extensive, are naturally destined for small farms."

⁸ Arthur Young, *Rural Economy*, 1773, p. 12; and so also his *Farmer's Letters*, pp. 129-31, and p. 123; H. Home (Lord Kames), *The Gentleman Farmer*, Edinburgh, 1776, Vol. I, pp. 270 ff.; and A. Hunter, *Georgical Essays*, York, 1803, Vol. IV, Essay XXIII. *Cp.* also Pitt, *op. cit.* p. 25; and Arbuthnot, *op. cit.* pp. 5-7.

used to plough the same area¹. Moreover only the large farmer possessed sufficient capital to take advantage of the improved methods of cultivation. He could obtain the modern tools and agricultural machines which were already, at the end of the eighteenth century, coming increasingly into use². He could carry out the expensive drainage of wet land, described by Blith in 1641 as the fundamental condition of agricultural progress³. It was the large farmer who on the sandy lands of Norfolk first introduced turnip cultivation and the model rotation of crops⁴. Then again it was only the large farmer who had the education necessary to enable him to appreciate and to apply the advances made in agricultural science. He travelled in order to enlarge his mind, and he read the scientific treatises on agriculture which the small holder regarded as the height of folly⁵. For these reasons, namely because they could appreciate the improvements made in the methods and science of corn-growing, praise was heaped upon the large farmers by such prominent writers as Arthur Young, William Marshall and Sir John Sinclair⁶. To expect improvements and the bringing of poor lands into cultivation from the little farmers was, as Anderson expressed it, as hopeless "as it would be to expect to gather pine-apples from thistles."⁷ "Poverty and ignorance are the ordinary inhabitants of small farms," declared Marshall⁸. So that the small farmer, even if he were able to increase his arable area, was from a technical and economic point of

¹ Davis, *Wiltshire*, p. 24:—"The parish of Brixton Deverill, which sixty years ago was in six hands and employed 43 horses, is now in three hands, and employs only 26 horses." See also Hunter, *op. cit.* p. 561.

² E.g. threshing machines, which were already in use in the eighth decade of the eighteenth century. For the fact that they were only used on large farms *cp.* Brown, *Rural Affairs*, Vol. I, p. 327.

³ *Cp.* Prothero, *op. cit.* p. 95.

⁴ *Cp.* Donaldson, *op. cit.* p. 403 ff.; also W. Marshall, *Rural Economy of Gloucestershire*, Vol. II, p. 299; and Thorold Rogers, *Industrial and Commercial History of England*, 1892, p. 254.

⁵ J. Middleton, *A General View of the Agriculture of Middlesex*, ed. of 1807, p. 54.

⁶ *Cp.* A. Young, *A Farmer's Tour through the Eastern Counties*, Vol. II, p. 161:—"If the preceding articles are properly reviewed, it will at once be apparent that no small farmers could effect such great things as have been done in Norfolk... You must go to a Curtis, a Mallet, a Barton, a Glover, a Carr, to see Norfolk husbandry. You will not among them find the stolen crops that are too often met with among the little occupiers of £100 a year in the eastern part of the county." See also Marshall, *Gloucestershire*, Vol. II, p. 29; A. Young, *Political Arithmetic*, p. 155; and Sir John Sinclair, *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1793, Vol. VIII, p. 613.

⁷ J. Anderson, *Essays relating to Agriculture*, 1798, Vol. III, p. 66.

⁸ W. Marshall, *Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, 1788, Vol. I, p. 255.

view far behind his competitor; a fact admitted even by writers who were not so one-sidedly in favour of large farming as were Young, Sinclair and Marshall¹.

. This inability to increase their production of corn or to compete in that sphere with the large farmers meant to the small holders the loss of the very conditions of their existence. With the change in the price of corn the whole face of the agricultural world was changed. The profits of corn-growers rose in proportion as the price went up. They found that even the most expensive improvements were well worth making. Corn-growing on a large scale became a good investment for capital. It even became the fashion. Doctors, lawyers, clergymen and soldiers all turned farmers². Meantime, with the rise of farming profits, the rent of farms rose too³. It was rising all through the second half of the eighteenth century, and by the last decade of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth it had as a rule become double or treble, sometimes four or five times, as high as it had been about 1770⁴.

But the farms whose rents had risen in this way were not the little holdings of the cottagers or of the small pasture-farmer. Nor could the rents of the small holders on the open fields be raised to any great extent, for, as has been shown, they were not in a position to increase their output of corn. It was the large farmer, selling corn wholesale and drawing high profits from its high price, who was able to pay an increased rent. Not only was his production per acre the highest, but his expenses of production per acre were much less than those on the small or even the medium holding. Very soon after the rise in prices began this state of affairs produced complaints on the part of the small holders. In 1772 Comber wrote that "a third very principal cause of complaint is, that the advancer of their rents has paid no regard to the various sizes of their farms, but has, almost indiscriminately, raised them all⁵." These enhanced rents were

¹ E.g. Davis, *Wiltshire*, p. 23 :—"In those modes of husbandry where the hands as well as the eyes of the farmer, and every branch of his family, can be fully employed, small farms can be managed to advantage. In dairy farms this is peculiarly the case, and it is frequently so in countries where the land is partly applied to breeding cattle and partly to raising corn...But on Wiltshire Down farms, where horses are necessary to plough the land and sheep to manure it, the little farmer stands on a very disadvantageous comparison with the great one; being obliged to bear a much greater proportional expense in horses and servants."

² Thorold Rogers, *Work and Wages*, p. 108.

³ A. Young, *Enquiry into the Progressive Value of Money*, p. 102.

⁴ For details see Levy, *op. cit.* pp. 6-7.

⁵ Comber, *op. cit.* p. 4.

“on the prospect of much additional corn to be grown¹.” But such methods were oppressive. The large farmers could bear a rise of a third in their rents better than the small farmers could bear a sixth. Comber attempts to find a solution of the difficulty by suggesting that, if the small farms were not to be entirely abolished, they must be somewhat enlarged at the expense of the very large holdings: or else their rents must be only in proportion to their profits. More particularly ought this to be so where the small holders had no opportunity of increasing their corn-production². In fact there was no other solution. The landlord, in face of the complaints of his smaller tenants, had only the choice between letting his land in large holdings and renouncing the possible increase in his rents³. It is not surprising that he generally chose the first alternative. For the higher the price of corn rose, the louder were the murmurs of the small men and the greater the well-being of the large holders⁴. But the method of enlargement was not that suggested by Comber. On the contrary, what happened was that the holdings of the little men were thrown into those of their larger neighbours, who thereupon promptly put under the plough the land which the small holder had hitherto used as pasture⁵. The immediate result invariably was that the landlord could without difficulty raise the rent. This was the meaning of what was known as “the engrossing of farms⁶.” The grand motive and object of the pro-

¹ Comber, *op. cit.* p. 9.

² *Op. cit.* p. 5.

³ Even Arthur Young says (*Annals*, Vol. XXIII, p. 435):—“The poor farmers of former times were unable to pay the new rents; the rise was, without doubt, exorbitant to them.”

⁴ Vancouver (*op. cit.* p. 101) says of the small holders of Devonshire:—“Though sparing and frugal in all their domestic affairs (they) are but seldom...considered to be in any way improving that very small capital with which they began the world.” See also G. B. Worgan, *A General View of the Agriculture of Cornwall*, 1811, p. 31:—“While the large farmers are getting rich, the little farmer finds it difficult to pay his rent, rates and taxes, and maintain his family.”

⁵ Peters, *The Rational Farmer*, pp. 132-3, says of the large farmers who took over the land of the ruined small holders, that they “obtained liberty to break up what had not been touched with the plough in the memory of man.”

⁶ E.g. the Earl of Selkirk, *Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 2nd ed. 1806, p. 37:—“The occupier of a minute portion of land, who, without any other source of profit, can raise little more produce than enough for his own consumption, has no means of paying an adequate rent...When they are thrown together, the farmer is enabled...from the same land, without any addition to its fertility, to afford a better rent to the landlord. This the Highland proprietors have already begun to experience: and a tendency to the engrossing of farms is very observable in the agricultural districts, as well as in those employed in pasturage.” Cp. also the example given by Home, *op. cit.* p. 267.

ceeding was the increase of rent¹: and the very reason why this consolidation of holdings was favoured by so many writers on the subject was that they regarded the rise of rents as the clearest sign of agricultural progress².

Nor was this the only gain to the landowners by the process of "engrossing." At the present day much of the half-heartedness of landlords over the question of small holdings is attributable to the expenses they entail in buildings and repairs. In the eighteenth century the same consideration contributed to quicken the progress of consolidation³. The houses of the small holders were either pulled down or used as dwelling-houses for the day-labourers demanded in increasing numbers by the large farm system⁴. Very often, especially in the case of the smaller cottages, they were simply allowed to fall to pieces⁵. At any rate, the expense of repairs was lessened. Indeed, even when the old buildings were still used as labourers' dwellings they often received very little in the way of repairs. When one became altogether uninhabitable, its occupants were simply turned into another, so that finally three or four families would be found inhabiting one of the old farmhouses⁶.

Besides these two advantages to the landlord, namely the increase of rent and the saving in cost of repairs, there was a third in the greater ease with which rent was collected from a few large tenants paying half-yearly, as compared with a large number of small men with smaller capitals and consequently less able to pay regularly⁷.

¹ Davis, *Wiltshire*, p. 24:—"The great object of consolidating farms is an increase of rent."

² Billingsley, *op. cit.* p. 156:—"Let me ask the advocates for small farms, what occasioned that consolidation of them, which they so much reprobate... Was it not because the large holders could afford to give more rent than the small?"

³ Young, *Farmer's Letters*, pp. 119-20: and Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 151.

⁴ *Report on Small Holdings*, 1889, qu. 4032, and also qu. 6983.

⁵ Strickland, *op. cit.* p. 42:—"It is much to be regretted, that the practice of suffering cottages to fall to decay, and the disinclination to build new ones, should be so prevalent in this part of the kingdom." Also Vancouver, *op. cit.* p. 98:—"In this district the cottages are certainly in a state of alarming decrease." And Perry, *op. cit.* p. 20:—"A gentleman... informed me, that in his native parish in Cambridgeshire, in 1803, forty-three fires were extinguished, and as many comfortable cottages demolished, to each of which from two to ten acres of land were attached, in order that a farm of 200 acres might be doubled in size."

⁶ Vancouver, *op. cit.* p. 94.

⁷ Forbes, *op. cit.* pp. 151-2; and Kent, *op. cit.* p. 206. Also W. Pennington, *Reflections on the various advantages resulting from the draining, inclosing and allotting of large commons*, etc., 1769, p. 56. He sums up the reasons thus:—"Engrossers generally give more rent, and want less allowed, if anything at all, for repairs."

Accordingly the tendency among landowners was increasingly in favour of the enlargement of the size of holding. But they also looked about them to see if it were not possible to obtain control of more land and so to form more of these very profitable large farms. The open fields, mostly held in small holdings, and above all the common pastures, presented themselves as possible objects of this transformation. With the profits of pasture-farming decreasing and the importance of corn-growing increasing it seemed to be desirable from an economic point of view to turn the commons into wheat-fields and to put both them and the open-field strips at the disposal of progressive individuals. Nor was it very difficult for the great landowners to effect this, since they were almost always the chief owners of land and chief holders of common rights in any given parish, or at any rate, by purchasing land, they could if they wished become so¹.

The increase in the number of Enclosure Acts in the course of the eighteenth century illustrates the rapidity with which the division of the commons and the consolidation of the open-field holdings proceeded. Between 1702 and 1760 only 246 Acts were passed, affecting about 400,000 acres. In the next fifty years the Acts reached the enormous total of 2438, and affected almost five million acres².

The immediate result of the enclosures was a further disappearance of small holders. The enclosures took place at the instance of the landlords with a view to the enhancement of rents³, and therefore to the formation of large holdings to be let to the corn-producing large farmer. This was accordingly the usual consequence of a Bill of Enclosure.

The first to disappear were the landholding day-labourers or cottiers. These received no land in consideration of their common rights unless they could actually prove them: very often their claims were altogether disregarded. But even in cases where they did receive a small allotment, they could not maintain their position. The scrap of land they received was not sufficient to feed a cow; nor had they the capital with which to do the necessary fencing. There was nothing for it but to sell their bit of ground⁴. The buyer was

¹ Cp. Hasbach, *op. cit.* pp. 61 ff. and 110.

² Cp. Levy, *op. cit.* p. 127.

³ Cp. Hasbach, *op. cit.* p. 56.

⁴ Cp. the *General Report on Enclosures*, 1808, pp. 55 f. Thus, as to the parish of Alconbury:—"Many kept cows that have not since (the enclosure): they could not enclose,

as a rule the landlord, and the allotment went to enlarge the holding of the large farmer¹.

But though the cottier class was the first to go, the ruin of the small holders proper, whether owners or tenants, went forward equally surely, if more slowly. The commons had been quite as fundamental a condition of their existence as of that of the cottiers. Everywhere, on the conclusion of an enclosure, they fell into distress. Many "starved with their families, till necessity forced them to quit their farms": and it was the general opinion that "strip the small farms of the benefit of the commons, and they are all at one stroke levelled with the ground²." The small farmers were not in a position to compensate the landlord for the expenses of enclosure by paying a higher rent. On the contrary, they found it difficult to continue to pay the old amount; for they had no longer free pasture for their stock, and besides, the land allotted to them was not enough to enable them to keep as many beasts as formerly⁴. Meantime the landlord had every motive for forming large arable holdings. While he could not hope to get a high rent from his smaller tenants he knew that their land, if let to a few large farmers, would bring in ever-increasing profits. In some cases a large farmer, on replacing several small ones, would not only offer ten times the rent they had paid, but would also take on himself the cost of the enclosure⁵.

and sold their allotments. Left without cows or land." Of Parndon, in Essex:—"Their little allotments all sold; could not enclose": and so of many others. Arthur Young mentions in the *Annals*, Vol. xxxvi (1801) innumerable cases in which the poor had lost their cows after enclosure.

¹ The writer of the *General Report on Enclosures* says (pp. 12 f.):—"In many cases the poor had unquestionably been injured. In some cases...where allotments were assigned, the cottagers could not pay the expense of the measure, and were forced to sell their allotments. In others, they kept cows by right of hiring their cottages, or common rights, and the land going of course to the proprietor, was added to the farms, and the poor sold their cows." Cp. the *Letter of the Earl of Winchelsea* in *Communications*, op. cit. Vol. 1, p. 80:—"I am sorry to say, that I am afraid most of those cottages were taken away at the time of the several enclosures, and the land thrown to the farms"; and p. 84:—"Whoever travels through the midland counties, and will take the trouble of enquiring, will generally receive for answer, that formerly there were a great many cottagers who kept cows, but that the land is now thrown to the farmers." Cp. also J. Farey, *A General View of the Agriculture of Derbyshire*, 1815, p. 76.

² *The Advantages and Disadvantages of enclosing Waste Lands*, 1772, p. 36.

³ *An Enquiry into the Advantages and Disadvantages resulting from Bills of Enclosure*, 1780, p. 14.

⁴ Hasbach, op. cit. p. 109.

⁵ J. Monk, *A General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 45, says for example that the parish of Queniborough had been let before enclosure for 2s. 6d. an acre; but a gentleman

Naturally, therefore, the landlords as a rule followed up enclosure by "engrossing¹." Small farmers, whose families had in many cases occupied the open-field holdings for centuries, disappeared in hundreds². Their fate was shared by the small freeholders and copyholders, who had also held a large number of the old type of holdings. They did not perhaps feel the effects of enclosure quite so directly as the tenant-farmers, who were simply given notice to quit by their landlords. The yeoman class could not suffer in the same way by a demand for increased rent on the competition of a large farmer bidding higher for the land they occupied. But they were equally touched by the economic difficulties entailed on small holders by the enclosures. The disappearance of the commons, for instance, was a great blow to them³. Again, they had not the capital necessary for fencing⁴. For this purpose many of them borrowed money from the large landowners, and so became indebted to their richer neighbours. Very soon they found themselves unable to keep up the payment of the interest due: and thereupon they sold their land to their creditor, "whose sole view at first setting out was to get the land of the whole parish into his own hands⁵." So soon as any parish came wholly into the hands of one landlord, he of course turned out the small holders and replaced them by large farmers⁶. There

had declared that he would give 25s. an acre and take the expenses of enclosure on himself if he might have a lease of 100 acres for twenty-one years.

¹ J. Donaldson, *A General View of the Agriculture of Northamptonshire*, 1794, p. 60, says that after the enclosures "several of those who occupy small farms must necessarily be removed, in order to enable the proprietors to class the lands into farms of a proper size." See also *The Advantages and Disadvantages*, pp. 7 f., for a description of the effect on the village community:—"The landowner, seeing the great increase of rent made by his neighbour, conceives a desire of following his example; the village is alarmed;...the small farmer dreads that his farm will be taken from him to be consolidated with the larger; the cottager...expects to lose his commons." Cp. also *Essays on Agriculture occasioned by reading Mr Stone's Report*, 1796, p. 24:—"When the commoners happen to be only tenants, which is frequently the case, the landlord, on enclosing, not uncommonly turns several of them out, to convert his smaller divisions into large farms."

² Even the *General Report*, though in favour of the enclosures, admits (p. 32) that—"there is, however, one class of farmers which have undoubtedly suffered by enclosures; for they have been greatly lessened in number: these are the little farmers." Cp. also T. Batchelor, *A General View of the Agriculture of Bedford*, p. 25:—"It is evident that the prevalence of the enclosing system, and other causes, have diminished the number of farms within the last fifty years to a considerable amount."

³ *General Report on Enclosures*, p. 158.

⁴ Addington, *op. cit.* p. 35:—"When their fields are enclosed, not a few of these small proprietors are obliged to sell their land, because they have not money to enclose it."

⁵ *Cursory Remarks on Enclosures*, 1786, pp. 6-7.

⁶ F. Moore, *Considerations on the exorbitant Price of Provisions*, 1773, p. 22:—"In

was an actual persecution of small owners, whose land was often practically stolen from them. The commissioners of enclosure well understood how to manage matters in the interests of the great landlords, so for instance that the land allotted to the small proprietors should lie as far as possible from their houses and farm buildings. The consequent increased expenses of cultivation did away with their small margin of profit¹. The little yeomen knew very well what enclosure meant to them. But all their efforts to oppose it were frustrated by the power of the great landlord or the large farmers, who only saw in the abolition of the small proprietors an opportunity for increasing the land in their own hands².

But while these numerous individuals were being ruined by the division of the commons and consolidation of the open-field holdings, extraordinary progress resulted on the economic side. From that point of view, enclosures and engrossing were only a means by which corn-growing was brought to yield the highest possible profits, and by improved methods of cultivation increasing quantities were produced to meet the increasing prices. Whereas Anderson regarded commons and "wastes" as one and the same thing³, the old village pastures were now broken up by the large farmers, and in many cases turned into excellent wheat-fields. Thus Arthur Young speaks of the sandy tracts of Norfolk, Suffolk and Nottinghamshire, "which yield corn and mutton and beef from the force of enclosure alone"; and of the Lincolnshire wolds, "which from barren heaths at 1s. per acre are by enclosure alone rendered profitable farms⁴." It is true that some writers, opponents of the enclosures and the large farm system, attempted to show that the enclosures had led to an extension of pasture-farming⁵, and so to condemn the movement from a

passing through a village near Swaffham, in the county of Norfolk, a few years ago, to my great mortification I beheld the houses tumbling into ruins, and the common fields all enclosed; upon enquiring into the cause of this melancholy alteration, I was informed that a gentleman of Lynn had bought that township and the next adjoining to it; that he had thrown the one into three, and the other into four farms; which before the enclosure were in about twenty farms: and upon my further enquiring what was become of the farmers who were turned out, the answer was, that some of them were dead, and the rest were become labourers."

¹ Girdler, *op. cit.* p. 40.

² Addington, *op. cit.* p. 35; and Girdler, *op. cit.* p. 40.

³ Anderson, *Essays*, Vol. III, p. 30.

⁴ Young, *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 148 ff.

⁵ The view that enclosures decreased arable land was mentioned and controverted as a popular argument in an *Essay on the Nature and Methods of ascertaining the specific Shares of Proprietors upon the Enclosure of Common Fields*, 1766, p. 13. It is to be found in

socio-political point of view, as leading to rural depopulation. But they were only able to point to a few counties, such as Leicestershire and Northampton, and some parts of Warwickshire and Huntingdonshire, where enclosure had occasionally led to a lessening of the area under corn. These cases were, as Arthur Young pointed out, fast diminishing exceptions; and in the whole north and east of the country enclosures were almost invariably followed by an extension of arable. It can hardly be supposed that pasture-farming would be extended after enclosure when by common admission the aim was everywhere to turn pasture into arable. As the price of corn rose higher this became increasingly desirable, and the enclosures would naturally be used to further it. During the French wars this was so markedly the case that no one any longer attempted to dispute it.

There was yet another cause which contributed to the extension of the large farm system. Many social reformers condemned at the time, and many still condemn, the part played by the landlords in the expropriation of the small holders and the division of the commons. But it was not only the large landowners, acting in their own interests as capitalists, who brought about this development. The small proprietors too, the independent yeomanry, even where they remained untouched by the effects of enclosure, dealt a deadly blow at the system of small holdings. The extinction of the yeomanry is the clearest illustration of the irresistible force of the economic conditions which were sweeping away the old system of agricultural holdings.

In the eighteenth century, and even in the second half of the century, the yeoman class was still numerous. Part of it was indeed

Price's *Observations on Reversionary Payments*, 1773, p. 388, in *Cursory Remarks*, p. 2, and in *An impartial view of English Agriculture*, 1766, p. 21. It is more surprising to find that Dr Hasbach adopts it (see his *History of the Agricultural Labourer*, pp. 369-71). The points which he brings forward in its favour cannot all be recounted here; but his argument that pasture-farming was more profitable than arable is certainly misleading. Various facts which contradict it have already been mentioned in the text. He notes that Arthur Young makes a calculation directed to show how much larger a profit was obtainable from an acre of pasture than from an acre of arable. But this is easily understood when it is remembered that Young did not share in the general passion for corn-growing, but advocated pasture-farming and mixed husbandry. Dr Hasbach also adduces in favour of his theory the fact that England ceased to export corn in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. But this by no means proves that the production of corn remained stationary, much less that it decreased. The phenomenon is quite sufficiently explained by the growth of population on the one hand and the bad harvests on the other. Otherwise it hardly seems to be doubted now that the enclosures in general, that is to say the enclosures of open fields and commons taken together, increased the area under corn. Cp. A. H. Johnson, *The Disappearance of the Small Landowner*, Oxford, 1909, pp. 28 f.

ruined by the enclosures. But apparently this would only affect these whose properties were very small. The larger proprietors would not be annihilated, nor even seriously injured, either by the division of the commons or by the cost of fencing¹. They would safely survive the enclosures. Further, not all the yeoman class even came in contact with the movement. Many held land which had been enclosed long ago. Nevertheless, even those members of the class who had not suffered and could not suffer by the enclosures disappeared in the course of the period 1760-1815.

As early as 1770 it began to be said that the yeomanry were vanishing. Arbuthnot, himself a large farmer, gives important evidence on this point. He was a champion of the large farm system, and set himself to reply to Price's attacks upon it. But he was obliged to admit the fact of the disappearance of many of the yeoman class, which Price had attributed to the development of large farming; and he wrote:—"I most truly lament the loss of our yeomanry, that set of men who really kept up the independence of this nation; and sorry I am to see their lands now in the hands of monopolizing lords²." Marshall, writing in the year 1787, also admits the fact³. The reports on the various counties published by the Board of Agriculture between 1790 and 1815 also contain much discussion as to, or notice of, this disappearance⁴. Of Westmorland, the classic country of the small holder in England, Pringle reported in 1794 that the class was diminishing day by day⁵. From the most various quarters about this time comes corroborating evidence⁶. But more significant than any mention of the fact is the light which is thrown on the nature of the process of extinction.

The disappearance of small properties in the period 1760-1815 did not always imply deterioration in the personal position of the yeoman himself. Discussions of the subject seldom mention bank-

¹ See also Hasbach, op. cit. pp. 107 ff.

² Arbuthnot, op. cit. p. 139.

³ Marshall, *Norfolk*, Vol. 1, p. 9:—"Formerly the farms were much smaller; but the numerous little places of the yeomanry having fallen into the hands of men of fortune, and being now incorporated with their extended estates, are laid out into farms of such sizes as best suit the interest, or the conveniency, of the present proprietors."

⁴ See e.g. Thos. Wedge, *A General View of the Agriculture of Cheshire*, 1794, p. 11; R. Brown, *A General View etc. of Derby*, 1794, p. 14; and Robertson, op. cit. p. 76.

⁵ A. Pringle, *A General View of the Agriculture of Westmorland*, Edinburgh, 1794, p. 40.

⁶ E.g. Holland, *Cheshire*, p. 80; R. W. Dickson, *A General View etc. of Lancashire*, 1814, p. 10; *The Complete English Farmer*, 1807, under the head *Yeomen*:—"This useful and important class of society has been within these few years considerably lessened."

ruptcy of the yeomen, or that they sold their land in order to take up some inferior occupation, to migrate to the towns, or to leave the country¹. Such occurrences became prominent at a later time, namely in the period of the corn-laws. But between 1760 and 1815 they were exceptional. At that time the yeomanry as a rule gave up their land with a light heart. They ceased to be small owners in order to become large farmers. There is abundant evidence of this fact². It is described by Albrecht Thaer, whose knowledge of English agricultural literature was unrivalled. The small owner saw, he says, that the tenant of a large farm was in a better position than himself and made a larger income, and he made up his mind to sell his land, and with the capital so acquired to devote himself afresh to farming, but now as a tenant. This, he continues, was the reason why in certain districts the yeoman class had almost entirely vanished, and only farmers and cottiers were to be found³. Marshall wrote of the Norfolk yeomen "that many, seeing men whom they lately held their inferiors raised by an excessive profit, which had been recently made by farming, became dissatisfied with the homeliness of their situation, and sold their comparatively small patrimonies in order that they might—agreeably with the fashion or frenzy of the day—become great farmers⁴." Sinclair, too, mentions it as "a well-known fact" that small owners frequently sold their estates in order to become large farmers⁵.

That the yeomen should have found tenant-farming more profitable than working their own land is natural enough under the circumstances of the time. They would feel all the effects of the rising corn-prices as other small holders felt them, with the exception that they did not have to pay increasing rents out of their decreasing profits. They, too, were pasture-farmers and market-gardeners, that is to say were devoted to those branches of farming whose profitableness was

¹ Cp. Levy, *Der Untergang klein-bäuerlicher Betriebe in England*, in *Conrad's Jahrbüchern*, 1903, p. 147.

² E.g. Th. Stone, *Suggestions for rendering the Enclosure of Common Fields a Source of Population and Riches*, 1787, pp. 42 f. :—"It has been a common circumstance, in counties where a spirit for improvement in agriculture first broke forth, that the yeomanry, or persons possessed of small estates in their own occupations, have been induced to sell them, to purchase a stock sufficient to improve larger tracts of land, the property of other persons, which they have hired upon improving leases."

³ A. Thaer, *Einleitung zur Kenntniss in die englische Landwirtschaft*, Hanover, 1801, Vol. I, pp. 25 f.

⁴ Cp. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 142.

⁵ Sinclair, *Code of Agriculture*, 1817, p. 37.

decreasing as the profitableness of corn-growing increased. Many of them would be injured as consumers by the rising price of bread and flour, if, as in Lincolnshire, a holding of twenty acres was required to provide the necessary bread for a family in the bad years¹. From these causes they would find their profits diminishing, though they might not be ruined. They were not forced to give up their holdings, as were the small tenant-farmers. But year by year they would find it more difficult to keep up their wonted standard of life, and it would appear impossible to improve their position in any way. Thus for example it was reported of the Derbyshire yeoman that "the smaller landowner (provincially "statesman")...finds his mind distracted how to preserve his estate, as well as the rank his father held, and how to improve his fortune on rational principles²." They would look with envy at the flourishing estate of the capitalistic large farmer. They would see how he concentrated on the production of corn, and what increasing profits he drew from the sale of his wheat. They would see how the large farmer and even the tenant of a medium-sized holding came to attain the position of a gentleman, and could enjoy all modern comforts and allow himself all manner of expenditure on luxuries, while they themselves had to work harder than their forefathers for a smaller return. On the other hand, the price of land had risen enormously since 1760. The high corn-prices and the possibility of drawing high rents from arable holdings had produced a positive land-hunger in the upper classes³. The buying and selling of land had become a business in which some speculators succeeded in making thousands of pounds annually⁴. Even the large farmers often bought to add to the farms they already rented⁵. At the same time there was an increasing demand for land from persons who wanted to buy estates for the sake of their social and political advantages. The political influence bound up with the ownership of land, and its necessity for purposes of shooting and hunting, all helped to drive up its price even higher than its agricultural value had already made it. Again, it was the ambition of men who had made fortunes in trade or manufacture to raise themselves out of the position of parvenus into

¹ Vide supra, p. 17.

² Brown, *Derbyshire*, p. 14.

³ See Levy, *Die Not etc.*, pp. 6 ff.

⁴ R. G. Welford, *How will Free Trade affect the Farmer?* 1843, p. 31.

⁵ Cp. e.g. J. Plymley, *A General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire*, 1803, p. 91:—"The number of gentlemen of small fortune living on their estates has decreased...but then the opulent farmer, who has purchased the farm he lives upon, and some smaller estate, which he sets or holds, with the large one he before rented, is a character that has increased."

the ranks of the landed gentry¹. The yeoman would at any time find an eager purchaser, if not in the neighbouring landlord or large farmer, then in some rich manufacturer or merchant, or in an anxious speculator.

Thus it would gradually be borne in upon him that it would serve him better to grow corn as a large farmer than to produce live-stock as a small proprietor. This was the view taken by every contemporary who concerned himself with the question, as for example by Sinclair² and Arthur Young. The latter wrote that to prefer to cultivate a small holding as proprietor rather than a large farm as tenant was to engage in a very unprofitable business³.

This question is of course one which still gives rise to lively discussions in scientific circles. The views here put forward were first published by the author in *Conrad's Jahrbüchern* for 1903. An attempt to controvert them was made by Dr Hasbach in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*, 1907, pp. 1-29. Whereas I began from the assumption that a distinction must be made between the small owners and the larger yeomen owning say 100 acres or upwards, Dr Hasbach entirely overlooks this distinction. He is content to show that "the yeomen" as such increased or decreased; and he uses for this purpose certain of the Reports from the Counties which I had expressly left out of account on the ground that the "yeomen" to whom they referred belonged to a higher social class than those with whom I was concerned; that they were to be reckoned partly even among the gentlemen farmers, and that they certainly held medium or large holdings, not small ones. Thus Dr Hasbach attempts to controvert my conclusions, which expressly referred to small owners (*Kleinbauern*) only, by facts concerning the yeomanry in general (*Bauern*). I never doubted that yeomen having large properties prospered between 1765 and 1815. They would find the rising corn-prices as profitable as did the large farmers. But they must be clearly distinguished from the small owners who went by the same name; and only where the Reports from the Counties made such a distinction possible can they be used for the elucidation of the problem. Mr Johnson, in his *Disappearance of the*

¹ L. Brentano, *Erbrechtspolitik*, Stuttgart, 1899; and G. J. Shaw Lefevre, *Agrarian Tenures*, 1893, pp. 7-8. Goldsmith's lines, written in 1770, may also be quoted:—

".....The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied,
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage and hounds."

² Sinclair, *Report on the Agricultural State of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1814, Vol. 1, p. 185.

³ In his *Elements of Agriculture*, an unprinted ms. in the British Museum.

Small Landowner (already quoted) seems also to have overlooked this point. He has attempted to throw new light on the subject by a study of the Land Tax Assessments. Students will be grateful for his labours; but still the results he has arrived at do not add very greatly to our knowledge. He himself warns the reader against attributing over-much importance to his statistical results. Their basis is too limited to admit of the deduction of general conclusions. Where he makes use of other sources (Surveys, previous writers, etc.) he falls into the same error as Dr Hasbach, namely that of failing to distinguish between the size of the holdings concerned. The same is true of Mr H. L. Gray's article *Yeoman Farming in Oxfordshire*, in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1910, pp. 293 ff. He also uses the Land Tax Assessments, and he further makes use of the Enclosure Awards and manorial surveys. But he too includes in his researches yeomen owning holdings of very various extent and, therefore, from an economic standpoint, of quite heterogeneous character. He writes, e.g. (p. 325) "Enclosure after 1785 did not fatally affect yeomen with holdings of from two acres to 300 acres." The yeomen of Kent, whom Mr Johnson cites on p. 142 of his book, were undoubtedly most of them medium or large holders, and not to be identified with the "small yeomen" of other counties¹: and the data which he quotes from Dr Rae are open to the same objection². When this necessary distinction is borne in mind, it will be realised that very little of the material available can be definitely interpreted of the small yeoman or small freeholder class. The ambiguity, from an economic point of view, of the word "yeoman" will, it may be feared, be a permanent hindrance to the final solution of the obscure problem in question.

Of course there were cases in which the yeoman sold, yet did not become a farmer. Some sold their estates in order to invest in an industrial undertaking: but as this is only reported from Lancashire³ it would seem that the movement in this direction was limited to those districts where manufactures were rapidly developing. Again, in some cases the yeoman sought to take advantage of the rise in the price of land by mortgaging his property. But on this point too there is little evidence, so that it does not appear to have been a common proceeding⁴. As a rule, the property was sold and its owner became a tenant-farmer. His estate was thrown together with others to form

¹ Cp. Hasbach, in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*, Band XXIV, 1, p. 15.

² Cp. Levy in *Conrad's Jahrbüchern*, 1903, pp. 148 f., and J. D. Rogers in Palgrave's *Dictionary*, Vol. III, p. 886.

³ J. Holt, *A General View of the Agriculture of Lancashire*, 1794, p. 12.

⁴ Levy, *Der Untergang etc.*, p. 159.

part of a large farm. But its late owner prospered in his new position and profited by the rising price of corn. In some cases he actually made so much money that he was able to buy his farm, and with it sometimes the very fields which he had previously utilised as a small proprietor¹.

The disappearance of the yeomanry is thus one more proof of the extraordinary force of the economic tendency to the development of the large farm system². As Mr Prothero has well expressed it, the small farm had become an anachronism³.

The improvements introduced by the larger unit of holding in the methods and results of arable farming were indeed brilliant; but the social consequences of this agrarian revolution were disastrous. To it is due the development of that agricultural proletariat which is now the rule on English soil. The rise in the profits of large-scale corn-growing expropriated the old race of landholding day-labourers. Not only they themselves, but also their wives and children, who had hitherto found employment on their own land, now became entirely dependent on wage-labour. The effect of the same conditions on the position of the little farmer and the smaller yeomen was even more cruel. Hitherto living almost entirely on the produce of their own holdings, they now descended to the dependent position of labourers on other men's farms. Thousands of small agriculturists, forced to give up their farms or to sell their little estates, had to submit to this fate⁴.

¹ Sinclair, *Code*, p. 37.

² The economic causes of the decay of the yeoman class, as described above, are treated as quite secondary in Arnold Toynbee's *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England*, 1884, chapter v. He finds the main causes "in social and political facts," which led to the buying out of the small owners. But he recognises that their disappearance was an important factor in the formation of the large farms. "Small arable farms would not pay, and must in any case have been thrown together." And if the economic position of the yeomen had not been undermined, they would probably have made a much stronger resistance to the pressure put upon them by the social and political ambitions of their richer neighbours. So that in any case the economic conditions were decisive in the matter.

³ Prothero, *op. cit.* p. 65.

⁴ Cp. Davies, *The Case of Labourers*, p. 55:—"The landowner, to render his income adequate to the increased expense of living, unites several small farms into one, raises the rent to the utmost, and avoids the expense of repairs. The rich farmer also engrosses as many farms as he is able to stock; lives in more credit and comfort than he could otherwise do; and out of the profits of several farms, makes an ample provision for one family. Thus thousands of families, which formerly gained an independent livelihood on those separate farms, have been gradually reduced to the class of day-labourers." Also Kent (*Hints*), pp. 211, 212:—"So soon as the little schools of industry are grasped into the hands of an over-grown, rapacious farmer, the former occupiers are, at once, all reduced to the state of day-labourers: and when their health or strength fails, there is but one resource; they, and their children, are thrown upon the parish." Cp. also Traill, *Social England*, Vol. v, 1896, pp. 455 and 623 f.:—"The result of enclosures, which were the great social feature that

Many contemporary authors saw practically no harm in this rise of a wealthy and luxurious class of large farmers on the one hand and the development of an agricultural proletariat on the other: especially those who attributed great importance to the technical agricultural improvements brought about by the large arable farm and the extension of enclosure. Arthur Young was certainly correct in pointing to the hard work of the small farmers, who laboured "without intermission like a horse¹." But he was not justified in concluding that the lot of a wage-labourer was any better, or even equally good. The small farmer, working for himself, knew very well what he was purchasing at the expense of his longer hours and intenser labour; he was gaining independence for himself and his family². Even when wages were high and conditions good for the labourer independence remained an inestimable advantage of the small holder, not to be compared with any merely monetary gain. But as a matter of fact the labourer's standard of comfort was being forced down from 1765 onwards. This was a possibility to which the authorities who favoured the transformation of the small independent agriculturists into wage-labourers had given no thought. They were of opinion that the extension of arable farming on the large scale would so increase the demand for labour that wages would rise and the standard of comfort improve. Sinclair prophesied this even as late as 1796³. But large as the new demand for labour was, the supply offered by the expropriated farmers and yeomen was larger. The seventh decade of the eighteenth century begins a long period marked by the absence of any complaint on the part of agriculturists concerning scarcity of labour. Even in the neighbourhood of the

marks the closing years of the eighteenth century is, in fact, the extinction of the common-field farmer, and his transformation into a wage-earner."

¹ Young, *Farmer's Letters*, p. 112; and *Lincolnshire*, p. 18.

² Mavor writes (op. cit. p. 80):—"I have heard it maintained, indeed, that (a labouring farmer) must work harder than a day-labourer, and it probably is the case; but then his toils are sweetened by the reflection that he is to reap the fruits of his own industry, and that he has no occasion to apply for parochial relief, either for himself or his family.... Voluntary labour is no hardship; and living on humble fare is no privation, to him who feels that he is providing against the contingencies of fortune, and laying up something against the approach of age."

³ *First Report from the Select Committee appointed to take into Consideration the Cultivation and Improvement of the Waste, Unenclosed and Unproductive Lands of the Kingdom*, 1796, p. 15:—"It is impossible to suppose that the poor should be injured by that circumstance, which secures to them a good market for their labour (in which the real riches of a cottager consists), which will furnish them with the means of constant employment, and by which the farmer will be enabled to pay them better wages than before."

large towns the agricultural labour-market was over-stocked, and the farmers could get as many men as they liked¹. The consequences were evident in the lowered purchasing-power of wages, the deteriorated position of the labourer, and the rising poor-rates.

The labourer had further lost the possibility of investing his savings in taking a small farm or some tiny piece of land such as would now be known as an allotment. In the old days an industrious couple who had managed to save some £50 or £100 could take a farm large enough to make themselves and their family independent². Now a labourer might offer a high rent for a few acres, but he would be contemptuously refused and the land let to a large farmer³. A landlord who built new cottages for his labourers and provided them with a small piece of garden-ground was held up as "an example worthy of imitation⁴," but the example was followed by very few. The large farmers were even less inclined than the landlords to allow land to their labourers⁵. It is significant that in 1774 the Act of Elizabeth providing that every cottage must have four acres of land annexed, was repealed⁶. The Act had long ceased to be enforced, but it was repealed in order to remove even the theoretical importance which might perhaps have been attributed to it by the opponents of the large farm system.

The reasons why the large farmers and their friendly landlords objected to labourers holding any land are not difficult to discover. The old-fashioned small farmers had found it convenient to have the labour of the cottiers at their disposal during harvest and on other like occasions, as by this arrangement they were free from any necessity of keeping labourers all the year through. The large farmer's interest was to the exact contrary. He was simply the manager of the farm, and he needed a supply of labour permanently at his disposal. He needed besides labourers who would not be hampered in their work for him by consideration of the needs of their own holdings⁷. Also he wanted his men to be as dependent as possible upon their employer, and consequently to depend for their livelihood on their

¹ Adam Murray remarks in his *General View of the Agriculture of Warwickshire*, 1813, p. 167, that although Warwickshire was a great manufacturing county, "I could not learn that any want of labourers prevailed, as plenty were to be had for all the agricultural purposes wanting."

² Duncumb, *op. cit.* p. 33.

³ Perry, *op. cit.* p. 21.

⁴ W. Gooch, *A General View of the Agriculture of Cambridge*, 1811, p. 31.

⁵ Kent, *Norfolk*, p. 172.

⁶ Cp. Traill, *Social England*, p. 337.

⁷ See on this point Dr Hasbach's interesting description and references, *op. cit.* p. 100, n. 1.

wages. To these considerations was added the natural desire to add every available acre of ground to the very profitable arable area¹. The consequence was that not even the most capable labourer could get the necessary means of raising himself out of his dependent position.

The distress which came upon the great mass of the agricultural population along with the development of large farming and enclosures contributed to the intensification of a phenomenon then as now regarded as most unsatisfactory by all students of social policy. The fall in the purchasing-power of agricultural wages, the deterioration in the position of the agricultural labourer, the swamping of the agricultural labour-market by the expropriated small holders, all joined to increase the dimensions of the rural exodus. It is true that industrial expansion was at the same time raising the attractive power of the towns and manufacturing districts: and this circumstance must be given the first place in any attempt to understand the causes of the ever-increasing exodus from the land at this period. But it is remarkable that the exodus should so have increased precisely when English agriculture was in such a flourishing condition, and when the rapid progress of English corn-growing was the envy and admiration of all continental observers. Although in the period from 1760 to 1815 the corn-supply of the kingdom was almost entirely home-grown, there were by 1811 only 35·2 per cent. of the families of Great Britain occupied in agriculture as against 44·4 per cent. who were interested in trade or commerce. So that in spite of the immense investment of capital in agriculture throughout the period, England was in process of transformation from an agricultural to an industrial nation. Complaints against the rapid decrease of the agricultural population resounded as loudly as they do to-day. In place of the modern lamentations over railway facilities Arthur Young in 1772 declaimed against the cheapening of transport. "Young men and women in the country fix their eye on London, as the last stage of their hope; they enter into service in the country for little else but to raise money enough to go to London, which was no such easy matter, when a stage-coach was four or five days creeping an hundred

¹ *Letter of the Earl of Winchelsea in Communications*, Vol. I, 1794, p. 83. He says that the farmers were as a rule disinclined to allow their labourers to hold land. "Perhaps one of their reasons for disliking this is, that the land, if not occupied by the labourers, would fall to their own share; and another, I am afraid, is that they rather wish to have the labourers more dependent upon them; for which reasons they are always desirous of hiring the house and land occupied by a labourer, under pretence that by that means the landlord will be secure of his rent, and that they will keep the house in repair."

miles; the fare and the expenses ran high. But now! a country fellow, one hundred miles from London, jumps on to a coach-box in the morning, and for eight or ten shillings gets to town by night; which makes a material difference; besides rendering the going up and down so easy, that the numbers who have seen London are increased tenfold, and of course ten times the boasts are sounded in the ears of country fools, to induce them to quit their healthy, clean fields, for a region of dirt, stink and noise¹." Undoubtedly the rapid growth of the towns and the cheapening of the means of communication must have exercised a great attraction on the agricultural population of the eighteenth century. But undoubtedly also, the rural exodus of the period would not have attained the extraordinary proportions it did if the attractive power of rural life for the mass of the people had not at the same time decreased. The labourer had no longer the chance of cultivating a holding of his own, nor the very stimulating hope of one day raising himself to the position of a small farmer. That hope lost, the chief superiority of work on the land was lost to the mind of the day-labourer. It was replaced by the hope of improving his position by migrating to the town². So too the expropriated small farmer, degraded to the position of a labourer, and unable to find work in the over-supplied agricultural market, swelled the rural exodus, being driven into the towns, or, if the money gained by the sale of his possessions was sufficient, he might make his way to America or the colonies³. Painters such as Wheatley showed him, his goods in his hand, turning his back on his ancestral home; and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* gave poetical expression to the desolation of the land:—

"The mournful peasant leads his humble band,
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden and a grave."

That the exodus was in many cases simply to be traced to enclosures and engrossing is evident from the statements of various contemporary writers on social subjects⁴. Even the enthusiasts for

¹ Young, *Farmer's Letters*, pp. 353 f.

² Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 160, draws attention to the fact that many young people went to the towns for the reason that the possibility of renting small farms no longer offered.

³ *Cursory Remarks*, p. 6.

⁴ E.g. Price, *op. cit.* p. 376. He complains "that the inhabitants of the cottages thrown down in the country fly to London and other towns, there to be corrupted and perish." Cp. further: *Uniting and Monopolising Farms*, 1767, p. 2; G. Chalmers, *An Estimate of the Comparative Strength of Great Britain*, ed. of 1802, p. 318:—"We owe much of this disadvantageous change to our modern system of agriculture....By consolidating farms to an enormous

agricultural progress could not deny that the extension of large farming meant rural depopulation. The Earl of Selkirk attempted to show that the marked emigration of Highlanders which began in the last years of the eighteenth century was caused by the formation of large farms¹; while Donaldson, a whole-hearted defender of the system, said that the one unanswerable objection to the large farms was the depopulation of the land².

The social evils which "the engrossing of farms" brought upon the mass of the agricultural population called out a furious hatred in the minds of the lower classes against the new development of agriculture, with its large farms and division of the commons. The rise in the price of corn from 1760 onwards was immediately followed by open revolt and rioting on the part of the people³. They saw the large farm system developing hand in hand with the rise in prices. Nothing was more natural than to confuse effect with cause. While in reality the increasing profits of arable farming led to the formation of large holdings, it was assumed that the large holdings caused the prices of provisions to rise. For centuries corn-merchants and middlemen had been blamed when corn-prices went up, and accused of holding back grain from the market. Innumerable laws had been passed to abate the nuisance arising from these dangerous speculators⁴. The large farmers were now compared to these hated "engrossers." It was claimed that they too raised prices, seeing that as cultivators of such large areas they were in a position to keep great quantities of corn out of the market⁵. As "the engrossing of corn" had been attacked,

extent; by forcing cottagers from their hamlets; by pretending to make much profit with little labour; the agricultural system has depopulated, and is depopulating, the shires wherein it prevails." Also Peters (*Agricultura*), p. 171:—"By monopolizing farms, and dearness of provisions, thousands are yearly emigrating"; and Girdler, op. cit. p. 28:—"These industrious people have been turned out of their possessions, and so deprived of their subsistence: or, if they subsist at all, are obliged to exist as labourers and servants to those who have deprived them of their livings and added them to larger farms; or are driven from their native homes to seek for bread in some populous town."

¹ Selkirk, op. cit. p. 94.

² Donaldson, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 405. Cp. also Holland, op. cit. pp. 95 f.; Vancouver, op. cit. p. 364; and Mavor, op. cit. p. 482.

³ Chalmers, op. cit. pp. 323 f. In 1768 Arthur Young describes the condition of the working classes "in those counties where the riots were most remarkable." *A Six Weeks' Tour through the Southern Counties*, title-page.

⁴ I.e. the laws against forestalling and engrossing. The series begins in the reign of Henry III, and the laws were re-enacted by George III in 1766. See the *Annual Register*, 1766, p. 224; and Thaer, op. cit. pp. 121 f.

⁵ Arbuthnot, op. cit. p. 14:—"The general outcry which has been made against the great farmer, for keeping his corn from the market, has not failed to inflame the minds of almost all

so was now "the engrossing of farms," and the large farmers were dubbed with the same titles as had formerly been bestowed on the hated forestallers¹. Writers more gifted with penetration vainly strove to show that the large farmers were not in a position to exercise a harmful influence on the corn-markets, and that the most they could do was to hinder a rapid fall of prices after harvest as a consequence of their not threshing or selling their grain at once². The people did not believe it. They found it more satisfactory, and perhaps also simpler, to ascribe the high prices under which they suffered to the wickedness of men than to the caprices of the weather and the chances of the harvest. Thus at the end of the eighteenth century a popular agitation arose against the "monopolising" farmers in every year of dearth, until in its last decade the true causes of the rise in prices became too clear to be misread.

The anger of the people against the new methods was reinforced by those writers who combated the rise of the large farm system and the division of the commons as being a social evil. They were indignant at the way in which the cottagers were robbed or cheated of their rights. They had a distaste for the large farmer, with his sense of superiority and his imitation of the ways of the gentry, comparing him to his disadvantage with the honest, hard-working small holder³. They were sorry to see the rural population degraded to the rank of a proletariat and leaving the field for the towns. They had little to say from an economic standpoint. They could not claim that the small farmer produced more corn than the large farmer, or that the unenclosed fields were models of agriculture. They could only point out the achievements of the small holders in the way of dairying and market-gardening. Nevertheless they brought the question of the proper size of the agricultural unit to the forefront of the politico-economic discussion. It was clear to them that the question was much more than the mere question of agricultural technique to which

ranks of people." Also *Uniting and Monopolising Farms*, p. 17; Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 159; Kent, *Hints*, p. 205; and Price, *op. cit.* pp. 373 f.

¹ *Considerations on the Present High Price of Provisions*, 1764, p. 11:—"Engrossing farmers, or, which is the same thing, engrossers of corn." Also *An Enquiry into the Advantages etc.*, p. 25; S. Hodson, *Address to the Different Classes of Persons in Great Britain*, 1795, p. 10; *Two Letters on the Flour Trade*, 1766, p. 19; Girdler, *op. cit.* p. 9; *An Humble Address to the King concerning the Dearness of Provisions*, 1775, pp. 13 f., etc.

² Peters, *The Rational Farmer*, p. 115; (N. Forster), *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Present High Price of Provisions*, 1767, p. 91; also *An Essay on the Causes of the Present High Price of Provisions*, 1773, pp. 18 ff.

³ See e.g. *Cursory Remarks*, p. 22.

it was reduced by many of its advocates. The new movement meant that a class hitherto independent was to fall to a position of mere wage-earning, and that a new capitalist class was to be developed to rule over them. To these results the writers in question were opposed. Dr Price, for instance, referring to the legislation of Henry VII and Henry VIII, which had protected the peasantry from expropriation, said:—"Such was the policy of former times. Modern policy is, indeed, more favourable to the higher classes of people; and the consequence of it may in time prove that the whole kingdom will consist of only gentry and beggars, or of grandees and slaves¹." Some writers proposed that the State should set a limit to the size of farms², though naturally all such suggestions were fore-doomed to failure. It was hardly likely that in a country ruled by the landed interest and a Parliament filled by landlords a champion should be found able and willing to carry through measures in opposition to a development which filled the pockets of the owners of agricultural land.

The opponents of large farming on social grounds were treated with the same contempt which is even now meted out by many agriculturists to critics who are alleged to have no practical experience. The representatives of the corn-growing interest occupied themselves primarily with the economic side of the matter. They pointed out the economic superiority of large holdings over small ones, which was obvious so far as corn-growing was concerned; they drew attention to the progress which agricultural technique had made under the new system, and so forth. Many of them also managed to satisfy their social conscience. Arthur Young, for example, expounded the theory that low wages meant more work done, and that therefore the deterioration of the labourer's standard of life might be profitable to the State³. The expropriation of the small holders and cottagers was said to be justified inasmuch as they would be better off in the position of wage-labourers; they would work less hard and would have less anxiety than when they were working for themselves. By arguments of this kind the weighty case developed against the large farm system and the enclosures was set aside.

The enthusiasm of these advocates of the large farm system and their failure to grasp the social aspect of the new conditions makes more remarkable the change in their ideas which took place at the

¹ Price, *op. cit.* p. 393.

² E.g. *The Causes of the Dearness of Provisions assigned*, Gloucester, 1766, p. 21; and also N. Forster, *op. cit.* pp. 94 ff.

³ Young, *Farmer's Letters*, Vol. 1, pp. 205 ff.; see also p. 37.

turn of the century. Possibly the evil social consequences showed themselves so clearly at this time that no candid thinker could deny them; possibly Young, Sinclair and the rest had really expected different results from the measures they advocated than actually followed. At any rate their views were radically altered. Young, once the most zealous advocate of the enclosures, now complained that they had in most cases, though not necessarily, produced "this evil;...that instead of giving property to the poor, or preserving it, or enabling them to acquire it, the very contrary effect has taken place¹." Again, whereas in 1772 he had spoken in the most contemptuous manner of the cottager's cows², he now lamented that they had been lost to the labourers through the consolidation of farms, and recounted at length all cases of the kind which were known to him. It seems that as he grew older he came to take more and more account of the social consequences of economic conditions, instead of looking simply at the greatest possible profit to be made, or at the purely economic fitness of things. And while from the latter point of view he had defended the large farm system on the ground of the increasing profitableness of corn-growing, now, regarding the social aspect of the new form of agricultural management, he became more and more sensible of the advantages of the small holding. On social grounds he became a strong advocate of the revival of cottagers' holdings (now to become known as allotments), though thirty years earlier he had for economic reasons approved of their abolition. He strongly opposed Malthus' arguments against the creation of allotments³, and described their advantages with as much enthusiasm as some modern social reformers show for them⁴. He suggested all possible means by which agricultural labourers, "that class of people upon which all others depend⁵," might be assured of holding land of their own and of possessing a cow⁶. Sinclair's change of mind is equally remarkable. In the Report already quoted he had described wage-labour as the mainstay of the cottager, and so had defended his

¹ *Annals of Agriculture*, Vol. xxxvi, 1801, p. 515.

² *Farmer's Letters*, p. 94, and also p. 181.

³ Malthus was decidedly against allotments, regarding them as an inducement to the increase of population, which, in his view, would speedily make the advantages of the allotment illusory. See *On the Principle of Population*, 5th ed. 1817, Vol. III, p. 241; and Young's reply in *Annals*, Vol. xli, 1804, p. 231.

⁴ Young, *Annals*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 510, 511 and 456; Vol. xxxix, 1803, p. 251; and Vol. xli, p. 231.

⁵ Young, *Lincolnshire*, p. 419.

⁶ Young, *The Question of Scarcity plainly stated and Remedies considered*, 1800, pp. 77 f.

position against those who regretted that the cottager should be driven from his holding. But at the beginning of the nineteenth century Sir John Sinclair is found as the most zealous advocate of allotments, and in fact as the first to demand that particular form of holding which has become famous in later times under the title of "three acres and a cow¹." In 1801 the Board of Agriculture, of which Sinclair was president, offered a prize to the person "who shall explain in the most satisfactory manner the best means of rendering the allotment system as general throughout the kingdom as circumstances will admit²." The enthusiasts who had seen nothing but good in the rise of corn-prices, the progress of the large farm system and the disappearance of small holdings now experienced a certain reaction. Arguing as economists they remained defenders of the larger agricultural unit, which was still in process of development under the spur of the rising corn-prices. But they could no longer deck out their economic ideal in plumes borrowed from social reformers. They now desired to get rid of the social evils which had followed upon their favoured developments by means of an artificial revival of the cottager's holding. Allotments were to make the labourer once again independent, keep him off the poor-rate and set bounds to the rural exodus³. Previously the social effects of the new system had been overlooked for the sake of its economic advantages. Now, in spite of the force of the economic tendencies, it was hoped that the social evils of the system might be overcome. But the hope was not justified by events.

Certain liberally-minded landlords, as for example Lord Winchelsea, did indeed support the propaganda of the Board of Agriculture⁴ in favour of the extension of allotments. But they were few in comparison with the great mass of landowners, and these, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, were eagerly developing the large farm system, as with the still rising corn-prices it brought them ever-increasing rents. The large farmers were their favourite tenants, and whatever the large farmers desired the landlords accepted as desirable. But the large farmers found the underpaid labour of the landless, rate-aided labourers quite to their mind, and Culley, for instance, declared

¹ Sir John Sinclair, *Observations on the Means of enabling a Cottager to keep a Cow*, 1801, pp. 4, 11.

² Cp. C. W. Stubbs, *The Land and the Labourer*, ed. of 1891, pp. 39 ff.

³ See e.g. Murray, *op. cit.* p. 31 :—"They will not, as now is too much the case, be driven into towns and villages far from the farm, for a residence."

⁴ *Communications*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. 1804, pp. 77 ff.; and *Annals*, Vol. XL, 1803, p. 51.

that for labourers "to have one, two, or three acres...does a great deal of harm....I consider it as one of the worst things that can or could happen to cultivation¹." Under these circumstances the movement in favour of allotments naturally disappeared and left no trace behind.

A complete revolution in agricultural conditions had in fact been brought about by the uninterrupted rise in the price of corn due to the combined results of the bad harvests which ruled from 1760 onwards, the French wars lasting almost a quarter of a century, and the Continental System. The enhanced price of corn had made arable farming more profitable than any other branch of agriculture. Accordingly the unit of holding most suitable for arable farming, namely the large farm, became the rule. On the large farm the methods and technique of wheat-cultivation were perfected to a degree which was the admiration and astonishment of both English and continental agricultural experts. But the old agricultural system had to be broken down before the new could be built up. The small farms and peasant properties, and the little holdings of the cottager and labourer, had to be sacrificed. The industrious small agriculturist had to give way to the large farmer possessed of capital and education. The distinction between management and manual labour, hitherto almost unknown in agriculture, became a visible fact. The small agriculturist had united both in his own person. The large farm demanded the rise of a class of wage-labourers obedient to the will of one organising mind. It thus led to the development of the antagonism of class-interests on the land as it exists at the present day.

England was subjected to no such invasions as those which sacrificed the continental country-people by the thousand to the ambition of the great French conqueror. But nevertheless masses of its agricultural population were brought from independence into social slavery, not indeed by the power of the cannon, but by the power of the plough.

¹ *Annals*, Vol. xxxvi, 1801, pp. 385 ff. ; and Billingsley, op. cit. p. 48.

CHAPTER II

THE PERIOD OF THE CORN-LAWS

THE peace of 1815 did not put an end to the development of the new form of agricultural holding which had grown up since the middle of the eighteenth century. On the contrary, the extension of the large farm system may be said to have continued well into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But from the time of the peace the development went on quietly, without awakening the public discussion and socio-political debates with which it had been accompanied from 1760 to 1815. Politicians, economists, and the working classes were now occupied with other matters. England had become a predominantly industrial nation; and accordingly all questions concerning the industrial population had attained a new importance. They now absorbed much of the interest previously directed to purely agricultural problems. The only agricultural question which was prominent between 1815 and 1846 was the controversy over the effects and justification of the corn-laws. Possibly, however, one reason for the cessation of the discussion on the large farm system was that its extension had become an everyday affair, too common for opposition to seem of any avail.

Nor was there any essential change in the condition of the market for agricultural produce during the period 1815 to 1846 as compared with that from 1760 to 1815. It might have been expected, and in fact many did expect, that after the peace general well-being would spread over the country, and that in consequence there would be an increased consumption of those articles of fare whose use had become uncommon during the dearth of corn. This certainly would have meant a change in market conditions. But the expectation was not fulfilled. Trade and industry, instead of expanding, suffered severe depression after 1815.

During the rule of the Continental System England's export trade naturally could not develop. Quantities of unsaleable commodities

lay upon the home market, ready to go abroad so soon as normal conditions of trade should be restored. Accordingly, when the Continental System was abolished, foreign markets were filled to overflowing by English goods. But the purchasing power of the foreign markets had been overestimated¹. They were not in a position to take up the surplus produce of England. Not only so, but they set up positive hindrances to the invasion of English goods which threatened to follow on the invasion of French armies, by erecting tariff walls in the interest of the development of their own industries². England had therefore little to hope from them. An enlightened policy would have concentrated on the development and strengthening of the home market. But on the contrary a protective policy was instituted which would necessarily lessen the home demand for the products of the factories and workshops.

The introduction of high duties on corn in the year 1815 artificially raised the price of the article of fare most important to the mass of the people. The curse entailed by the bad harvests and the limitation of imports due to the war was extended to the peace period for the benefit of corn-growers and landlords, and the price of wheat was kept by the corn-laws³ above the price of the international market. But the more the labouring classes had to pay for their bread, the less could they afford to expend on the products of industry. In bad seasons the high duties caused an enormous rise in price⁴. No corresponding rise in wages followed, either on the land or in the towns⁵. The consequence must have been that in such years the demand of the masses for anything except bread was enormously reduced. The diminished demand was of course followed by a decrease of supply, whereby masses of labourers were thrown out of work, or at least had their wages reduced. Accordingly the years of bad harvests and high corn-prices were always periods of terrible industrial and commercial crisis, as especially in the years 1817 to 1819, 1825, 1829 to 1832, and 1839 to 1845.

The misery of the labouring classes, not only in such years of acute crisis, but throughout the period of the corn-laws, has been described

¹ Harriet Martineau, *History of England*, 1849, Vol. 1, p. 34.

² L. Brentano, *Anfang und Ende der englischen Kornzölle*, a supplement to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1892, Nr. 15, p. 4.

³ Levy, *Die Not etc.*, p. 129.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104, and passim.

⁵ H. Martineau, op. cit. Vol. II, p. 407; Tooke, op. cit. Vol. III, p. 52. See also H. Levy, *Landarbeiter und Kornzölle*, in *Nation*, Nov. 2nd, 1901; and the *Memoirs of Sir Robert Peel*, 1857, Vol. II, p. 338.

so often and so well both by contemporary and by recent writers¹, that it is unnecessary to do more than refer to it here. Its significance in this connection is simply that the condition of the working classes determines the kind of food which they consume, and the kind of food consumed reacts upon the relative profitableness of the various branches of agricultural production.

The standard of life of the mass of the population was, as has been seen, so bad in the period of dearth at the end of the eighteenth century and during the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the nineteenth, that it is hardly possible to conceive that it could be worsened. Nevertheless, according to the detailed reports published, it appears that a further deterioration did take place, more especially after 1834, when the rate in aid of wages was abolished. Between that time and the abolition of the corn-laws the food of the people was reduced to a hitherto unknown minimum. "Taking the whole body of agricultural labourers," says a Parliamentary Report of the year 1840², "beef and mutton, as articles of food among them, are almost unknown from the north of England to the south.... When 8s. out of 15s. must be expended in bread and flour by a family, and the greater part of the rest be expended in rent, clothing and fuel, what is there left for animal food?" When after 1836 the price of corn, after a period of comparative cheapness, rose rapidly and considerably, the consumption of meat in the large towns fell, often by 30 or 40 per cent.³ With rising corn-prices and no corresponding rise of wages, the consumption of meat, eggs, butter and cheese was always the first thing to be limited⁴. It will be understood that these things had indeed become luxuries when it is realised to what extraordinary means of satisfying their hunger the people were often reduced. Nettles, swedes, and rotten apples were requisitioned⁵. Children fought in the streets for scraps which the rich would not even have offered to their dogs⁶. "I could tell you of mothers dividing a farthing salt herring and a halfpennyworth of

¹ See e.g. S. Laing, *National Distress*, 1844, pp. 28 ff., and p. 53. *Speeches by Richard Cobden*, 1870, Vol. I, pp. 30, 152 f., 163 ff.; F. Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klassen in England*, Leipzig, 1845, pp. 314-317; H. Martineau, op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 520 f.; H. Dunkley, *The Charter of the Nations*, 1854, pp. 65 ff.; and especially Walpole, op. cit. Vol. IV, pp. 357 ff.

² *Report on the Handloom Weavers*, Reports, Vol. XXIV, Sess. 1840 [636], p. 28.

³ *Report of the Statistical Committee appointed by the Anti-Corn Law Conference*, p. 18.

⁴ *Report of the great Anti-Corn Law Meeting*, 1842, pp. 22 f. For the small consumption of meat see also B. W. Noel, *A Plea for the Poor*, 1841, p. 3; and Brereton, *Wages etc.*, p. 61. Cp. also the labourers' budgets given by A. Wilson Fox, in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1903, pp. 323-325.

⁵ *Speeches of R. Cobden*, p. 164.

⁶ Walpole, op. cit. Vol. IV, p. 363.

potatoes among a family of seven," wrote the correspondent of an M.P. in 1841¹. The old fare of bread, bacon and beer was frequently replaced by water-gruel, rice and potatoes, and for drink a decoction of boiled tea-leaves².

In spite of all expectations from the peace, therefore, the people found themselves after 1815 not merely in no better position, but perhaps degraded even below the level to which they had already become accustomed. A commercial policy which raised the price of the chief necessary of life and at the same time injured trade and industry produced a worse state of affairs in time of peace than any war could have brought about. The policy did not even profit those in whose interests such a fearful burden was laid on the people at large. The farmers, who were to have reaped the chief advantages of the corn-laws, were in a state of almost continuous distress from 1815 to 1846³. Meantime the agricultural result of the high duties was to carry still further that one-sided development of arable farming which had been going on since 1760.

The Reports of the Committees on the Distressed Condition of Agriculture in 1836-7 prove clearly that pasture-farming and market-gardening not only made no progress during the thirty years of the corn-law period, but even deteriorated⁴. The rotation of crops, a matter whose importance in relation to pasture-farming had been recognised even in the eighteenth century, was only in use on a comparatively few model farms. Baker reported on Essex in 1845 that experiments with winter root-crops had been made for the first time in that county a few years previously⁵. In 1849 the dairy-farms of Suffolk, for which that county had been celebrated in the time of Arthur Young, had practically disappeared⁶. According to Raynbird's figures, 90 per cent. fewer cows were kept than at that period; everywhere pasture had been turned into arable. "The corn laws...have induced farmers to rely for profit upon a great breadth of wheat, to the neglect of stock-farming and improved systems of husbandry,"

¹ Hansard, Vol. LIX, p. 759.

² R. Heath, *The English Peasant*, 1893, p. 45.

³ Levy, *Die Not etc.*, passim.

⁴ See especially the evidence of the Scottish farmers. They had introduced the rotation of crops much more commonly than their English neighbours, and one after another expressed their astonishment at the poor methods of breeding and bad agricultural systems of the Englishmen. See e.g. *Report on Agriculture*, 1837, qu. 13,813 and qu. 14,089.

⁵ R. Baker, *On the Farming of Essex*, in *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, 1835, p. 3.

⁶ W. and H. Raynbird, *On the Agriculture of Suffolk*, 1849, pp. 7, 94.

wrote an agriculturist in 1843¹. This must have been at least in part caused by the inability of the mass of the population to consume animal products to any extent worth mentioning. Obviously production could not extend when the market was continually shrinking. Partly too, however, the corn-duties directly stimulated the production of corn at the expense of other branches of agriculture. They never indeed achieved the end of which the landed interest had dreamed at the time of their introduction. But men are often inclined to forget the facts of the present, in favour of their hopes for the future: and the agriculturists acted as if the results they expected from the corn-laws had in reality been achieved. Although neither the tariff of 1815 nor that of 1828 were able to keep the price of corn anywhere near the desired level, yet the farmers behaved as though that high price, which they supposed to be guaranteed, already existed. Wastes and pastures were broken up, and rents, which had risen so enormously since 1760, were not lowered as prices fell, because it was supposed that the duties would bring the price up again². In bad seasons the artificial limitation of imports did in fact produce this rise of price. But in good seasons the increased home production alone sufficed to bring the price of wheat below the level which seemed profitable to the agriculturist, so that universal lamentation was made over low prices and high rents. Even at such times, however, the idea which was bound up with the maintenance of the corn-laws, namely that some time or other prices would rise again, continued to influence men's minds so powerfully that the area under corn still continued to extend³. This extension of arable in the period 1815 to 1846 was based on an imaginary foundation; it resulted from an assumption which was never justified. The population at large suffered under it inasmuch as they had to pay more for their bread than the people of other countries. The English farmers got no profit out of the difference in price at home and abroad, but before five different Parliamentary enquiries complained of their distressed condition. Such was the price paid for the artificial stimulation of corn-growing and for the continued extension of the area under wheat at the expense of pasture and other purposes.

Two causes thus contributed to maintain the predominance, or it might almost be said the monopoly, of arable farming in English

¹ Welford, *op. cit.* p. 199.

² Levy, *Die Not etc.*, pp. 76 f.

³ See an exhaustive discussion of the point, with references, in Levy, *op. cit.* *passim*, and especially Chapter IV.

agriculture after the year 1815. There was, first, a diminished consumption of meat and other animal products, and of fruit, vegetables, etc., in consequence of the deteriorated standard of life of the working classes: and secondly, an artificial stimulus was given to the production of corn by the introduction of the high duties. The peace, therefore, produced no change in the direction in which agricultural production was moving. Equally little change appeared in the matter of the unit of holding.

For reasons already glanced at, the progress of the large farm system cannot be so clearly traced after 1815 as before that date. Individual examples have to suffice in place of more general statements. But such examples can be adduced in plenty. Thus on the celebrated Netherby estate in Cumberland, the number of farmers was decreased by more than 50 per cent. between 1820 and 1850. "Fine farms of 300 and 400 acres, now occupied in one holding by an enterprising tenant, were then (1820) held in seven or eight separate possessions¹," wrote Caird in 1852. Again, it is reported that after 1820 very many dairy-farms were transformed into arable, and this would naturally be accompanied by an increase in the number of acres in one hand². Little allotments, too, in large numbers were thrown into larger holdings³, the labourers being deprived of their bits of land⁴. Where common-land was enclosed—and about 900,000 acres were enclosed by Act of Parliament between 1820 and 1850—the formation of large farms was always the immediate result. When Exmoor Forest was enclosed, for instance, farms of from 400 to 1000 acres, and even up to 2000 acres, were formed⁵. Agricultural authorities recommended the landlords even in the classic districts of small holdings to throw two or three farms into one, as a matter of "good policy⁶." The policy was so well carried out that Caird, on his tour of 1850, found many districts in

¹ J. Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-1851*, 1882, p. 352.

² Carmichael, *Corn Laws*, Edinburgh and London, 1838, p. 13.

³ G. Buckland, *On the Farming of Kent*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, Vol. VI (1845), p. 296.

⁴ Cp. *The Labourer's Friend*, 1835, p. 31:—"I could point out parishes which fifty years ago contained a body of poor who, I observed at that time, and for several years after, were comfortable and happy, as to their temporal concerns: and this was chiefly owing to their occupying their crofts, and orchards, and gardens close to their cottages. The parish of Evestan, next to Potton, of which I was curate about fifty years ago...was circumstanced, as to the poor, as above stated; but within the last twenty years the cottages have been deprived of all their accompaniments, which enabled the occupiers to keep some one, some two, and some three cows, besides pigs and poultry."

⁵ T. D. Acland and W. Sturge, *The Farming of Somersetshire*, 1851, p. 159.

⁶ W. F. Karkeek, *On the Farming of Cornwall*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, Vol. VI (1845), p. 402.

which the farms had attained an area of from 1000 to 3000 acres and over¹.

Moreover, it was during the corn-law period that the final disappearance of the yeomanry took place. The greater part of this class had already vanished in the previous period, having preferred the position of a large farmer to that of a small owner. Those who had not made that really beneficial exchange burdened their estates with mortgages and attempted with the capital so raised to increase the falling profits of their small holdings. In particular, they tried, by all manner of improvements, to increase their production of corn, in order to share in the large profits promised by its high price. But when after 1815, in spite of the corn-laws, the price of wheat failed to return to its former height, these remaining yeomen were the first to suffer. Their decreased profits no longer sufficed to keep up the interest on their mortgages, and they either sold their land or were foreclosed upon². Their estates were swallowed up by the great landlord and the large farmer, so that by 1836 a witness could state that the yeomanry "are, as a body, ceasing to exist at all³."

Meantime, while the system of the large farm was thus making progress, the counter-movement, begun early in the nineteenth century on social grounds, had little practical effect. The Board of Agriculture and its most zealous supporters had initiated legislation for the purpose of assisting the labourers once more to the use of a bit of land. The agitation for allotments had proved a failure, but it had led to the passing of an Act in 1819 which empowered the overseers to buy or rent land for the purpose of letting it out again "to any poor and industrious inhabitant of the parish⁴." Another Act was passed in 1832, probably as a result of the agricultural riots of that and the preceding years, recommending that a certain proportion of all newly-enclosed land should be let out in allotments⁵. But neither Act produced any marked result⁶. The private agitation

¹ Caird, *op. cit.* p. 89 (Hants) and p. 130 (Sussex).

² *Report on the State of Agriculture*, 1833, pp. ix f., where it is said of the yeomanry that "The high prices of the last war led to speculation in the purchase, improvement and enclosure of land; money was borrowed on the paternal estate for speculations of this nature, which, at the time, were not considered improvident. Prices have fallen, the debt still remains, or the estate has changed owners, and the interval between the fall of prices and the adjustment of charge and of expenditure to the altered value of money, has been most pernicious to this body of men."

³ *Report on Agriculture*, 1837 (House of Lords), qu. 5107.

⁴ Cited by Stubbs, *op. cit.* p. 41.

⁵ Sir G. Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, Vol. II, p. 202.

⁶ The Earl of Onslow, *Landlords and Allotments*, 1886, p. 10.

continued alongside of the official efforts. The Labourers' Friend Society was founded in the thirties, its object being to carry on, both by lectures and publications, a propaganda in favour of allotments¹; or, as it claimed, to abolish the evils entailed on labourers and small farmers by the high corn-prices and the consequent enclosures and engrossing². But energetically as the agitation was carried on³, it could not accomplish economic impossibilities. Even at the present day, when the formation of allotments is often to the economic advantage of the landowner, the ingrained conservatism of the landlord and his larger tenants frequently prevents their introduction. Such opposition was naturally much more powerful at a time when the allotment had indeed many social gains to offer, but practically no economic advantage.

Nowadays many farmers are in favour of allotments because they rightly suppose that a holding of his own will tend to keep the labourer upon the land. But in the corn-law period employers had nothing to fear from a rural exodus. The very cause of the low wages of agricultural labour was that the industrial crises and the depression of trade made it impossible for the labourers to migrate to the towns⁴. The rural labour-market was overflowing precisely because the movement to the towns was at a standstill⁵. In the thirties the farmers even regarded it as a blessing if labourers did leave the land, since, far from forcing up wages in the still swamped labour-market, such migration freed the country from beggars and vagrants, and relieved the rates⁶. Farmers were not at that time crying out for workers; it was the starving labourers who begged for work at any price. Under these circumstances there was naturally

¹ *Proceedings of the Labourers' Friend Society*, 1832, pp. 7 f.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 9 f.

³ Cp. the many articles on the Allotment System published at this period; e.g. in *The Farmers' Magazine*, 1836 (July to December), p. 167 b.

⁴ The *Proceedings of the Labourers' Friend Society*, loc. cit., state that the existing condition of industry precluded all hope that the superfluous agricultural labourers would be absorbed by the towns, since the industrial labour-market was already over-crowded.

⁵ Cp. among other authorities Wilson Fox, *Agricultural Wages during the last Fifty Years*, in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1903, p. 312:—"Does any one want to go back to the period between the 'twenties' and the 'fifties,' when the rural population was so plentiful in many counties outside the northern ones that there was not enough employment to go round?"

⁶ The steward of the Duke of Bedford stated in 1836 that the farmers had been very desirous that labourers should find work on the construction of the Birmingham railway. No rise of wages had followed: the agricultural labour-market had only been freed from a great over-supply of labour, and the poor-rates had been relieved. *Report of 1836*, qu. 1897 ff. and qu. 9590 ff.

no need for an allotment system as a means of keeping labourers on the land, where they were obliged to stay whatever happened. On the other hand the farmers held that labourers' allotments were against their interests, since the labourers might prefer working on their own land to working for an employer¹.

The landlords, whose main interest was in the well-being of their larger tenants, found in the farmers' dislike of allotments sufficient reason for not favouring the movement. They had no economic advantage to expect if they took it up. A very impartial Parliamentary report of 1843 stated that land let in allotments paid the same rent per acre as land of the same quality let to a large farmer². If so, the landlord had obviously small inducement to form allotments on economic grounds. For while they paid no higher rents than did the large farms, they cost more in buildings, repairs and administration.

It was very natural that the allotment-holders should not be able to pay more per acre, or even should pay less, than the farmer. Except in the neighbourhood of towns, where there was a demand for fresh vegetables, eggs and poultry, they could not make any considerable income out of their allotments. Elsewhere, corn was the most profitable agricultural product. Enthusiasts for the allotment system, like Thornton³, did indeed maintain that spade-cultivation could make corn-growing profitable even on the smallest holding. But experience soon showed that the cottager did not succeed on such lines. If he held two or three acres, to cultivate them by the spade took up far too much time. On the other hand the area was too small to give full employment to a horse and plough: both would have to be borrowed from neighbouring larger holders⁴.

Thus the socio-political agitation, aiming at the extension of allotments as a means of improving the miserable position of the labourer, found an unconquerable obstacle in the economic circum-

¹ A land-surveyor, Mr Driver, told the *Select Committee on Agriculture* in 1833 (qu. 11,760) that "In some instances I have found that the farmers have been dissatisfied, because they found that the labourers if employed on their own grounds were more fatigued and less able to perform their labour to their employers." A land-agent, Mr Joseph Lee, told the same Committee (qu. 6099) that "We do not wish to give them so much (land) as to take away their attention from the farmers." A little book called *Practical Directions for the Cultivation of Cottage Gardens*, by Charles Lawrence, 1831, is also characteristic. The writer warns the labourers not to neglect their wage-earning for the sake of their own land.

² *Report on Women and Children in Agriculture*, 1843, p. 15.

³ W. T. Thornton, *Over-population and its Remedy*, 1846, p. 346.

⁴ *Report on Agriculture*, 1833, qu. 10,849.

stances of the time. Here and there allotments were formed¹. But they were only isolated experiments, or a result of the social ideals of liberally-minded landlords. How little success the movement had on the whole may be seen by an official estimate of 1868, according to which, of the seven million acres enclosed since 1760, only 2000 had passed to the labourers in the form of allotments².

The corn-laws, then, caused an artificial development of that unit of holding which the economic conditions of the previous period had favoured³. Accordingly nothing was more natural than that a radical alteration of existing agricultural conditions and a consequent far-reaching change in the customary size of holdings should be expected from the abolition of the corn-laws in 1846.

¹ *Report on Agriculture*, 1833, qu. 10,249, 10,997 ff.; also the *Report on the Employment of Women and Children*, 1843, p. 15; and the *Journal R. A. S.*, Vol. IX, p. 127.

² G. C. Brodrick, *English Land and English Landlords*, 1881, p. 234.

³ Certain political motives may also have contributed in some cases to the establishment of small holdings. When the great Anti-Corn Law agitation began about 1840, it was recognised in the Free Trade camp that the agitation must be extended to the rural constituencies. The old Chandos clause was dug up, according to which forty shilling freeholders had a right to a vote. When in 1843 Lord Morpeth, M.P. for the West Riding, failed to secure re-election, Cobden determined to put the "forty-shilling freehold system" into operation. The Free Traders, with the large sums at their disposal, were not long in obtaining the 5000 votes which they required, and Lord Morpeth was duly re-elected. There is no evidence as to the exact extent to which the activity of the Anti-Corn Law League was carried in this direction. After the dissolution of the League its policy of creating freeholders naturally came to an end also. But it was continued by James Taylor, who founded a freehold land society at Birmingham in 1847. By 1853 there were five such societies in Birmingham, which had bought nineteen estates and created 2300 allotments upon them. Some weeks after Taylor's society was founded Cobden started the National Freehold Land Society, also for electoral purposes. But it seems impossible that these associations should have led to any serious development of small holdings, in view of their small number and local nature. For a fuller account see Th. Beggs, *Freehold Land Societies*, in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. XVI (1853), pp. 338 ff.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE ABOLITION OF THE CORN-LAWS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN COMPETITION

(a) *The Agricultural History of the First Thirty Years of Free Trade.*

IN 1846 the landed interest believed that the much dreaded fall in wheat-prices, which had begun after the break-up of the Continental System, would now at last become a serious fact. The Free Traders too believed that the price would fall rapidly, and the only difference between their view and that of the Protectionists was that they regarded the prospect from an optimistic instead of a pessimistic standpoint. This coming revolution in prices was also expected to produce considerable alteration in the relative positions of the various types of agricultural holding. James Caird, the best authority on agriculture whom England has ever possessed, predicted in 1851¹ that in the immediate future there would be a decrease in corn-production, but that with the increasing population and its growing wealth, together with the improved means of communication, pasture-farming and market-gardening would prosper. And as these branches of production, which would partly replace arable farming, required industry, care, skill and attention to so much greater a degree than corn-growing, large holdings such as existed in the eastern counties would no longer be profitably manageable by one man. Accordingly there would be a decrease in the number of large farms, and more capital and labour would be concentrated on the working of smaller areas. Thornton², Alister³ and others wrote in

¹ Caird, *English Agriculture*, pp. 483 f.

² Thornton, *op. cit.* p. 329:—"The repeal of the corn-laws might thus cause the race of large capitalists to disappear from the occupation of the soil, and to be replaced by small farmers, holding on an average, perhaps, not more than fifty acres each."

³ R. Alister, *Barriers to the National Prosperity of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1853, p. 51:—"High-farming must now be the order of the day; and the inevitable consequence will be, that farms will become less in size, for it will not pay now for one man to take two farms while his capital is barely sufficient for one."

the same sense. Their expectations were quite correct in theory, but in practice they remained unfulfilled. The assumption on which all such deductions were based did not prove justified.

Contrary to all expectation, there was no serious fall in the price of wheat in the thirty years following the abolition of the corn-laws. Between 1847 and 1881 wheat was at about 52s. a quarter. This was not much below the average for the period 1815 to 1846, which was between 56s. and 57s.¹ In spite, however, of the small change in wheat-prices, considerable alterations in English agriculture did begin with the year 1846. But they were of a different kind from those which had been expected. The significance of the first thirty years of agricultural free trade was that corn-production, far from being abandoned, was made more profitable than ever.

In the corn-law period a price of 52s. had always produced the cry of agricultural distress². But after 1846 the same price saw agriculture flourishing, so much so that the years from 1850 to 1880 have come to be regarded as "the good old times" of arable farming. The question arises as to why it was that the same price produced such different results in the two periods. The present writer has attempted to answer this question in another place³, and must refer the reader to that earlier publication if what is here said on the subject appears to be too concise.

The changes which began in 1846 were of various kinds. For one thing, the economic conceptions of the farmers themselves underwent a considerable revolution. Under the corn-laws they had reckoned on high prices and regarded relatively low prices as an exception. Now they reckoned on low prices, and it was the relatively high prices which were regarded as exceptional. The general expectation of a fall in prices consequent on the abolition of the protective duties set the corn-growers seeking some way of meeting such a fall. The obvious means was to diminish the cost of production. But as in fact prices only fell very slightly, a large profit was made out of the lowered cost thus originated. Chief among the improvements made with this end in view was drainage. Caird states that between 1848 and 1878 about £10,000,000 was expended for this purpose⁴. Artificial manures were also brought into common use, and agriculture generally was put upon a scientific basis. Among the great contributors to this result were the Royal

¹ Levy, *Die Not etc.*, pp. 109 and 128.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 19 f., 48 and 63.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 110 ff.

⁴ Caird, *The Landed Interest*, 1878, pp. 82 f.

Agricultural Society, and of individuals J. B. Lawes, Pusey, Mechi and Voelker. Instead of more or less exhausting the soil, as had still been common even up to 1846, scientific analysis of its quality was now undertaken, and the principle applied of replacing as far as possible what was taken from it¹. Lastly, the use of agricultural machinery was rapidly and profitably extended². In addition to these efforts of their own, the farmers were helped in their attempt to reduce cost of production by the cheapening of transport, and especially by the great extension of the railway network.

In regard of technical progress the agriculture of 1846 to 1879 stands in sharp contrast to that of the corn-law period. "The abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846 may be taken as the critical date in the history of the agriculture of the century," writes Professor Somerville. "Since that time its progress has been steady, and for many years its results were satisfactory³."

But it is possible that not all these improvements together would have made the great change which actually was achieved in English agriculture if it had not been for another development, which may be said to have appeared as altogether a new phenomenon after 1846. Pasture-farming came to the front. Throughout the corn-law period it had been a neglected branch of agriculture; but from 1846 onwards it became an object of the greatest interest to farmers and land-owners. Its profitableness increased continually, and contributed essentially to the remarkable advance made by English agriculture in the first thirty years of free trade.

This success of pasture-farming depended on the greatly increased demand for meat after the year 1846. English industry, which had not only not increased its exports, but at times had even found them diminishing between 1815 and 1846, experienced a great revival after the abolition of the duties on the necessaries of life⁴. The imports of foreign provisions were balanced by the export of the products of home industries. The value of British and Irish exports rose from £47,284,488 in 1842 to £189,953,957 in 1869. Further, with the increasing well-being of the working classes the effective demand of the home market increased. Wages, both on the land and in the

¹ Caird, *The Landed Interest*, 1878, pp. 22 ff.

² Besides the authorities cited in Levy, op. cit., see also John Noble, *Fiscal Legislation, 1842-1865*, 1867, pp. 158-162.

³ Wm. Somerville, *Agricultural Progress in the Nineteenth Century*, in *The Bath and West and Southern Counties Society's Journal*, Vol. XII (1902), p. 15.

⁴ Spencer Walpole, op. cit. Vol. v, pp. 151-153.

towns, rose rapidly after the introduction of free trade¹. On the land, according to Caird, they rose from 9s. 7d. in 1850 to 14s. in 1878². The price of bread remaining the same, or even falling somewhat³, the purchasing-power of wages in regard of all other provisions must have risen greatly so soon as the money-wage went up. The people could once again enjoy the animal food which they had so long been compelled to renounce. Hitherto bread and potatoes had been their staple diet: now they could add some amount of meat, butter and cheese. In 1851, five years after the abolition of the corn-laws, Caird reported⁴ that though bread was still the chief food of the great mass of the population, the consumption of meat and cheese was increasing enormously in the manufacturing districts, where wages were high. Even in the agricultural districts, he said, the labourers were beginning to eat meat occasionally, or to add a little cheese to their bread. It would seem that the increased demand for animal food in the first thirty years of free trade was mainly for fresh meat and perhaps for cheese. Butter, milk, eggs and poultry were less in demand. At any rate the increased consumption of fresh meat is the point always specially emphasized by the writers of the period⁵. Accordingly the price of that commodity rose considerably⁶; and under the comparatively undeveloped transport conditions foreign competition hardly entered into this sphere⁷.

The rising price of meat made the hitherto neglected art of pasture-farming profitable, and farmers quickly took it up. Unfortunately there are no reliable agricultural statistics of earlier date than 1867. But the series of figures beginning in that year shows that between 1867 and 1874 the cattle and sheep kept had increased by about a million heads, the area under green crops by about 100,000 acres, that under clover, sainfoin and "grasses under rotation" by 300,000

¹ A. L. Bowley, *Wages in the United Kingdom, 1900*, p. 130; *Memoranda, Statistical Tables and Charts prepared by the Board of Trade, 1903*, pp. 264-9; Noble, *op. cit.* pp. 161-9.

² Caird, *Landed Interest*, p. 157.

³ Cp. the prices of bread as given in the official Report on *Wholesale and Retail Prices, 1903*, pp. 221, 224 and 225.

⁴ Caird, *English Agriculture*, p. 484.

⁵ *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*, July 1857—March 1859, pp. 554 f. :—"Butcher-meat is now much more extensively used among all classes, arising from the prosperous condition of the labourers, who, having good wages, cheap bread, and also cheap beef, immediately after the repeal of the Corn Laws, were enabled to indulge daily in a little flesh." See also Caird, *Landed Interest*, p. 30 :—"The leap which the consumption of meat took in consequence of the general rise of wages in all branches of trade and employment."

⁶ Levy, *Die Not etc.*, p. 131.

⁷ Caird, *Landed Interest*, p. 30.

acres, and permanent pasture by two million acres¹. These figures prove clearly that the expansion of pasture-farming, the beginning of which had been noted by Caird on his tour in 1851, was proceeding rapidly.

But it would be a mistake to suppose that at this time pasture-farming was already playing a leading part in English agriculture. The fact was that now at last that combination of arable and pasture so strongly recommended by the theorists of earlier times had come into being. It is true that to some extent pasture-farming had become an end in itself, under the influence of the high profits obtainable on meat. But it was also a means to an end; a means, namely, of making corn-growing profitable or more profitable. When the corn-laws were abolished it became clear to every agriculturist that pasture must be extended if plough-land was still to be cultivated at a profit. Only by keeping more beasts could the land be provided with the necessary amount of natural manure, and a better rotation of crops, especially an increase of root-crops, be introduced. On this followed the rise in meat-prices, making pasture-farming desirable for its own sake. There was no longer any economic hindrance to the general introduction of a proper rotation; it had become profitable to increase the live-stock kept. On light soils, or so-called turnip-lands, such rotations had long been adopted, since it was impossible to grow corn there otherwise². The question was more difficult on the commoner heavy clay soils. Here the wetness of the land was a hindrance to the introduction of a wider range of crops³, which could only be overcome by expensive drainage operations. While live-stock remained unprofitable the drainage of such lands was not undertaken, and consequently the rotation of crops was not introduced. But from the moment when pasture-farming promised large profits, drainage began, since it had become worth while to introduce the rotation even at heavy cost. Thus it was pasture-farming which led to improved methods of arable farming, a result which naturally in its turn led to an increased production of corn⁴. The quantity of manure available

¹ *Statistical Abstracts*, No. 28, p. 119.

² The light soils were accordingly held to be less profitable than the heavy clay soils until the expansion of pasture-farming, because the rotation of crops was expensive so long as live-stock brought no profit. Cp. Levy, *Die Not etc.*, pp. 83 f.; Brown, *A Treatise etc.*, Vol. II, pp. 468 ff.; and J. Russel, *A Treatise on Practical and Chemical Agriculture*, 1830, p. 71.

³ See e.g. R. N. Bacon, *Report on the Agriculture of Norfolk*, 1844, p. 33.

⁴ The rotation of crops as practised on light soils (see note 1 above) had so increased their corn-production, that, though at one time supposed to be unsuited to arable, in 1850 they could produce corn much more cheaply than the characteristic English wheat-land, that is to say the heavy clay. Caird, *English Agriculture*, p. 476.

from the increased number of beasts kept was also a very effective means to the same end. Indeed this development of pasture-farming often had quite astonishing results on the corn-harvests on poor land¹.

In addition to the other methods of reducing the cost of corn-production, pasture-farming thus contributed largely to produce that profitableness of arable farming vainly expected before 1846. Instead of the predicted depression there was a period of prosperity. Corn-growing continued to play the chief part on the larger and medium-sized holdings, though pasture now held an important second place beside it. Whether the actual area under corn was diminished cannot be decided as regards the twenty years next following 1846. But it seems improbable in view of the fact that between 1867 and 1878 there were no changes in the arable area which cannot be satisfactorily explained by the nature of the harvests in the years in question². In all probability the arable area was even increased in the decade 1850-60, for wheat-prices reached an unusually high level in the years 1853 to 1857. In any case, even if the area remained unchanged, the total corn-production must have increased between 1850 and 1878, since the produce per acre was increased during that period³. Similarly there is no doubt that this increased productivity and the improved technique enormously increased the profits of the corn-growers. A farmer informed the Commission of 1894 that on the £10,000 which he sank in his farm between 1861 and 1874 (partly as tenant and partly as owner) he made on an average 8½ per cent. In 1873 his profit was 10 per cent.⁴

Such high profits both on arable and pasture produced a veritable land-hunger. The good old times of the Continental System seemed to have returned. When a farm fell vacant, dozens of would-be tenants competed for it⁵. The consequence was that rents were again

¹ See for a typical example A. Poggendorf, *Die Landwirtschaft in England*, Leipzig, 1860, p. 234. He says that the soil of a certain farm was so unproductive that in spite of its relatively low rent several successive tenants went bankrupt. A new tenant undertook the drainage of the land. After the work was completed he tried to get as heavy a green crop as possible, to be fed off by sheep. Next he sowed barley and clover, and let the clover too be eaten on the ground by the sheep. Then, sowing wheat, he obtained a crop of 25 bushels per acre. From one rotation to another the results improved, and he very soon replaced his capital together with its interest.

² Levy, *Die Not etc.*, p. 109.

³ Caird, *Landed Interest*, p. 157.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture*, 1894, qu. 18,163-18,171.

⁵ *Report on Agriculture*, 1881, qu. 35,760:—"About 12 years ago farming had been fairly good, and then there was such a rush for land that whenever land was to be let there were 20 applications for it, and a man never considered what he was going to pay for it if he could only get the chance of renting it."

driven up above the economic level. Between 1860 and 1880 the demand was such that "some people were foolish enough to take farms at ridiculous rents¹." But of course the economic rent was raised by the growing profits of agriculture. In the first thirty years of free trade the rise was 10 per cent. according to Caird², 25 per cent. according to Sir Robert Giffen, who based his estimate on the figures of Schedule B of the Income-Tax Returns. And there is no doubt that in many cases rents were raised not only by this percentage, but by 30 and even 50 per cent.³

Thus agriculture, and especially arable farming, experienced after 1846 such a period of prosperity as had not been anticipated even by the most optimistic Free Traders. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the expected reaction in regard of the size of holdings did not take place. On the contrary, the "engrossing of farms," as the eighteenth century had called it, reached its highest point at this time.

(b) *The Continued Extension of the Large Farm System.*

The extension of pasture-farming after 1846 was in no way opposed to the further expansion of the large farm system, nor favourable to a revival of small holdings. Corn-production, owing to the high prices and the changes wrought by the application of an improved technique, remained the most profitable branch of agriculture. The only difference was that it no longer played the sole part in the farmer's mind. The rising price of meat made pasture-farming profitable too. But the extension of the latter was not made at the cost of arable, nor did it lead to consideration as to the unit of holding best suited for it. It fell into line, so to say, with the predominant system of large arable farms. All that happened was that the large farmer, instead of being almost exclusively a corn-grower, as he had been from 1760 to 1850, now combined corn-growing with stock-farming. This resulted, where arable was the main interest, from the more intensive rotation of crops generally introduced after 1846: so that between 1850 and 1880 pasture-farming came to be a necessary and lucrative supplement

¹ *Report of 1894*, Pt. II, qu. 25,173.

² Caird, *Landed Interest*, p. 157. Cp. also the description given by Noble, *op. cit.* pp. 153 ff.

³ *Report on Agriculture, 1894*, Vol. II, p. 622, qu. 18,163-18,171. According to the evidence of a farmer named Cooper rents rose between 1865 and 1883 alone by 30 per cent. See the *Report of 1880*, qu. 52,808 ff.; also qu. 53,611, and the evidence of the land-agent Squarey in the *Report of 1894*, qu. 7202. Another land-agent, Punchard, said that between 1865 and 1880 rents had risen by 25 and even 50 per cent. *Ibid.*, qu. 15,085 ff.

to the corn-growing of the large farm. Unless this is understood it will remain a puzzle why the prosperity of pasture-farming after 1846 did not lead to a diminution in the size of holdings. The efforts of agriculturists were directed towards increasing corn-production, but they sought to base this more firmly by combining it with pasture. Pasture-farming by itself, and especially dairy-farming, made very little progress¹. And clearly the new system, as it included arable, would in no way tend to the formation of small holdings.

Young's law, that ploughing necessarily costs a small holder more than a large, held good for the combined arable and pasture-farm. Besides this, the extensive drainage works required by the introduction of a rotation of crops on stiff clay lands could only be undertaken by capitalist large farmers, and also cost less in proportion when carried out over a large area. The large farmer again had the advantage in the matter of artificial manures, especially needed on the heavy lands, and in the use of oil-cake and other artificial foods. But more important than all these was perhaps his advantage in the use of modern agricultural machines. The application of steam-power to agriculture was making rapid progress. But it was evident that the steam-plough would only pay its way on large farms and large fields². Halkett's steam-plough, for instance, was said to be economically applicable only on areas of 500 to 1000 acres³. It was also remarked that where holdings were comparatively small, as in Worcestershire and Westmorland, the steam-plough was not as a matter of fact brought into use⁴. Some enthusiasts held, indeed, that small holders might use the steam-plough by means of co-operation. But this has never been effected up to the present time, and does not seem likely to be effected in the future. The case of the steam threshing-machine was much the same as that of the steam-plough; it, too, was long in coming into use in the districts where the smaller holdings predominated⁵. It was on the large arable farm that the progress of agricultural science and technique was promptly applied. Accordingly, in proportion as the increasing profitableness of corn-

¹ R. E. Prothero, *English Agriculture in the Reign of Queen Victoria*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1901, p. 29.

² Caird, *Landed Interest*, p. 17 :—"A steam plough...is not capable of doing its work with economy within small enclosures."

³ *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*, July 1859 to March 1861, p. 131.

⁴ *Journal R. A. S.*, 1867, pp. 455 f. :—"Steam cultivation does not appear to increase in favour with our farmers; one cause of this is that the holdings are small, and the cost of hiring comes too high."

⁵ Caird, *English Agriculture*, p. 78.

growing made such technical progress valuable, the chances of the large holding increased and those of the small holding fell. In addition, the prices of wool and mutton were rising¹, and sheep-breeding was always best carried out on a large scale: so that even in grass districts the case for the large farm was stronger than ever before.

The fact that the profitableness of the large farm did not decrease even when pasture was combined with arable is instructive for those who claim that increasing intensiveness in agriculture must invariably improve the position of the small holding as against the large. "Increased intensiveness" is a very vague term. It is undeniable that the intensiveness of agriculture, that is to say the application of capital and labour to the land, increased considerably between 1846 and 1880. But this was the period when the large farm system reached its highest level. The increased intensiveness, in fact, was such as to consist mainly in an increased application of capital. Drainage, the use of labour-saving machinery, and so forth, were matters which made great demands upon capital. The increase of intensiveness which depends on an increased application of labour is quite another thing. Intensity of capital is the postulate of progress in corn-production. It means a quantitative increase in the application of one element of production, namely capital, to the land. But increased intensity of labour may mean a qualitative change in that other element, labour: that is to say, not merely that more labour is applied to agricultural production, but that the labour is of a different kind, i.e. is itself more intensive. For an increased intensity of labour, therefore, the demand is not on things, but on persons. It is not sufficient that the agriculturist should expend more capital on his holding; the labour which he bestows on it must take on a new character.

But this qualitative intensity of labour has never been of importance in arable farming: whereas intensive application of capital has always been of the highest importance to it. Now in the period 1850 to 1880 the large arable farmer was obviously in a much better position than the small to make this increased application of capital. The small corn-grower had not the capital necessary for the profitable use of the technical and scientific improvements in agricultural methods, without which corn-growing could no longer be made to pay. This was why districts where farms were small were

¹ *Wholesale and Retail Prices*, p. 52.

considered backward in an agricultural sense¹. An experiment made by Sir Francis Baring on his estate in Hampshire shows how little capacity for survival was manifested by the small farm system at this time of flourishing corn-farming². In 1849 he created fifteen small arable holdings on this estate, letting them on terms very favourable to the tenants. But they did not prosper, and by 1879 the fifteen were reduced to eleven. The four farms which had thus fallen in were thrown into other holdings; and the consequence of this "engrossing" was that the larger farms, by the use of oil-cake and artificial cattle-foods, produced more corn and at the same time more beef and mutton than the remaining small farms. The steam-plough made its appearance. And that these improvements gave the farmers a larger net profit was evident from the fact that they continued to prosper, whereas the small holders had not been able to maintain their position.

On the other hand it had to be admitted that small holdings had the advantage over large where the question was not one of corn-growing and meat-producing, but of dairying, poultry-farming, fruit and vegetable growing, and the like. It was even claimed that these branches of agriculture were pursued almost exclusively on small holdings, and Tremenhere stated in an official report that the supply of such articles as butter, milk, eggs, etc. would practically cease if the small farms were to disappear³. But the production of these commodities played so unimportant a part in agricultural production generally that the farms devoted to them appeared to be a negligible quantity. Corn-growing and stock-feeding occupied the chief place. The development of other branches of production might seem desirable in the interests of the consumer, but they were insignificant from the producer's point of view. Small farming, which undertook these other branches and prospered by their means, seemed to be the exception to the rule, or an isolated deviation from the law that in agriculture production on the large scale alone was economically profitable. The

¹ For Durham see *Journal R. A. S.*, Vol. XVII (1856), p. 98; and for Berkshire, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, 1860, p. 8.

² Th. Stirton, *Small Holdings*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1894, pp. 90-92.

³ *Second Report on the Employment of Women and Children*, 1868, p. 144:—"There are perhaps a few advantages attending small farms which should not be entirely overlooked. More attention is bestowed on the production of butter, eggs, poultry, honey, and other useful commodities, which a large farmer usually deems beneath his notice, and which if the whole area of the country was thrown into large farms would scarcely be produced at all, or if produced would be solely for the consumption of the occupier and his family." Cp. also on the success of milk-production on allotment-holdings, Trash's article in the *County Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. VI (1871), p. 17.

same Tremenhere who paid homage to the achievements of the small farmer in the sphere of the lesser agricultural products said also that in his opinion the day of small holdings was over. They might be slow to disappear, but their time was past¹. Such was also the conviction of landlords at this time, and the result was that the tendency to increase the size of holdings showed itself more and more decidedly in the period between 1850 and 1880.

The landlords expected advantages in every direction from this enlargement of farms. Their rents rose, cost of repairs for buildings, fences, etc., diminished, estate management was simplified, and the farms themselves became models of constant agricultural progress². Naturally they carried on the movement vigorously—how vigorously all the relevant Parliamentary Reports of the period show³. Wherever a small farm was given up, it was added to some larger holding⁴. This, of course, happened most markedly in the arable districts⁵. But the formation of large farms made rapid progress even in counties which had hitherto been almost the preserve of the small holder, owing to the natural qualities of soil and climate which had

¹ *Report on the Employment etc.* loc. cit.

² See *Journal R. A. S.*, 1863, p. 165, in a letter from Mr John Gurdon, a landowner :—“ I am for progressing with the times ; I like large farms and extended fields ; they save the landlord many buildings, they give full scope to machinery, and they meet the requirements of the march of intellect.” Also *Report of 1881*, qu. 32,142, 32,143, where Mr A. Doyle states that in his opinion “the tendency to throw farms together” has arisen “from the conviction that good farming cannot be carried on except upon farms of considerable extent.” “Large farms,” he says, “are regarded as one of the necessities of progressive agriculture.” See also *ibid.*, qu. 55,687 (Mr J. Walter, M.P.) :—“ At the time when the system of engrossing farms, as it was called, came in, the landlords had the idea that by consolidating farms, they would be saving money on buildings.” And so qu. 4788. Also *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 3809. For the tendency to consolidate farms for the sake of simplifying the work of estate management, see *Report of 1881*, qu. 37,610.

³ *Second Report on the Employment of Women and Children*, 1868-9, p. 144 :—“ The number of small farms is rapidly diminishing....The consolidation of farms is becoming general, as it is found by the landed proprietors to be most beneficial to their interests.” See also the statement of the farmer Overmann as to Norfolk in the *Report on Agriculture*, 1880, qu. 51,879 ; and the *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 3807, 3808 :—“ Do you think that the number of small holdings has decreased or increased ?—In what period ?—I said in your experience ; say in the last 30 years ?—Small holdings have decreased certainly in that time.” Also *Report of 1894*, Vol. II, qu. 19,149 ff. :—“ In your opinion between 1871 and 1881 there was a considerable consolidation of farms going on ?—Yes, there was ; it was constantly going on.”

⁴ *Report on Agriculture*, 1894, qu. 39,166.

⁵ Shaw Lefevre, op. cit. p. 22 :—“ Throughout the chief agricultural districts, however, and especially in the arable districts, the small farms have been largely reduced in numbers during the last fifty or sixty years, and in many parts have almost ceased to exist.”

suiting them for grass-farming, as in Cumberland and Westmorland¹. Unfortunately, the movement cannot be statistically traced throughout the period. The figures only begin in 1870; that is to say they are only available for its last ten years. In the following table² some of the figures for the year 1885 are also given, for the reason that the classification then adopted is more suitable for comparison with that of 1870 than is the classification of the intervening years. The number of holdings was :—

<i>Year</i>	$\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 acre	1 to 5 acres	5 to 20 acres	20 to 50 acres	50 to 100 acres	100 to 1000 acres and over
1870			111,284	62,826	45,629	71,488
1872	18,422	93,148				
1875					44,872	74,029
1880					44,602	74,889
1885	21,069	103,229	109,285	61,146	44,893	75,328

This table shows a movement in three directions. In the first place, between 1870 and 1885 there is a marked increase in the very small holdings of a quarter of an acre up to five acres. In the second place, there is a considerable decrease in the holdings of 5—20, 20—50 and 50—100 acres. Finally there is a great increase in holdings of 100 acres and over.

Disregarding the allotment-holdings and the smallest farms, these statistics therefore confirm the evidence of the official reports and the agricultural experts. The fact that the very small holdings increased does not justify any conclusion that the small farm system properly so-called was extending. Such holdings as a rule belong to men whose agricultural activities form neither their main work nor the chief source of their income. More especially at this period, when market-gardening still played so small a part, it is not to be supposed that holdings of a quarter of an acre to five acres could be anything but a by-employment for their occupiers. Moreover, these occupiers were not all interested in their land from a capitalist point of view: they held it largely from social and not from economic motives. The wealth of all classes had rapidly increased between 1846 and 1870. Therewith arose a large number of persons in the lower classes who

¹ C. Webster, in *Journal R. A. S.*, and series, Vol. IV (1868), p. 8; and T. Farrall, *ibid.*, Vol. X (1874), p. 416.

² See the *Agricultural Returns* for the various years.

wanted to use their savings to own or rent a bit of land, even if they had to pay more in interest or rent than they could recover out of the profits on its produce. In the same way the rising wages of agricultural labour enabled labourers in some cases to take allotments even at a rent which had to be partly met out of their wages. But the class more especially responsible for these tiny holdings were the numerous small shopkeepers or artisans, widows, little investors and so forth, who as their incomes rose invested in land, irrespective of the economic results to be expected. In all these ways such little holdings might increase, especially in the neighbourhood of the towns, without showing in any way that small holdings were economically advantageous. Where purely agricultural purposes were concerned, that is to say undoubtedly from five acres upwards, the decrease begins, and only ends where the medium sized holdings end, to give place to an increase of large holdings. This was what happened, in the period 1846 to 1880, everywhere where purely economic circumstances came into consideration, that is to say everywhere except on the outskirts of the towns and manufacturing districts.

(c) *The Geographical Distribution of Holdings.*

The tendency in the matter of the unit of agricultural holding had thus remained the same in the first thirty years of Free Trade as it had been since the middle of the eighteenth century. Chronologically, the extension of the large farm system may be described as first constituting an agrarian revolution and then continuing slowly but surely for more than sixty years. But the geographical aspect of the development also deserves some attention. The expulsion of the small holding by the large holding took place at a time when corn-growing had almost a monopoly of agricultural effort, for the reason that meat, dairy produce, poultry and the like had become less profitable, while the profits on corn were steadily increasing. This remarkable but one-sided agricultural development, however, naturally was not equally marked in all parts of the country. It took place earliest and most completely where the conditions were by nature most suited to corn-production: that is to say chiefly in the north and east of England. As early as 1796 Robertson pointed out that the dryness of the eastern counties suited them especially for corn, while in the

west the moist climate gave the advantage to pasture¹. Caird, writing in 1851, says the same². Accordingly it was the north and east which profited most and earliest from the rising corn-prices. Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Lincolnshire and their neighbours were the counties which continually met with the approval of Arthur Young for their rapid extension of arable and application of the newest agricultural methods. The natural qualities of the different parts of the country, and their varying suitability for arable or pasture would of course affect the question of the unit of holding, since this was dependent on the agricultural use to which the land was to be put. In the eastern counties climatic conditions favoured the rapid substitution of arable for pasture. Accordingly the large farm system, as most suited to arable farming, was also most rapidly developed in the east. In the west, on the contrary, the extension of the arable area met with great hindrances, in spite of the rising price of corn, since here the natural conditions were all in favour of pasture. Therefore the small farm held its own longer against the large. In this way certain units of holding became characteristic of certain geographical areas. Robertson wrote at the end of the eighteenth century that "allowing for many local and accidental exceptions, large farms...are chiefly to be met with in the eastern shires of England; small farms...in those of the west³." The same conditions continued in the nineteenth century, as Caird's investigations proved⁴. Not that the west of England had not felt the movement for the enlargement of holdings very considerably. It will be remembered that various writers noticed that in years when corn-prices were specially high farmers did not hesitate to break up the most beautiful grass-lands, nor landlords to throw little pasture farms into large arable holdings. What is true is merely that the process of consolidation was not carried so far on the grass-lands of the west as on the arable farms of the east; more small holdings survived in the western counties, and accordingly there the average size of farms was less⁵. It might even be said that where the natural conditions for corn-growing were altogether absent, there the large farm never made its appearance. But such districts were few, and the cases in which small farms succeeded in maintaining their existence over a whole district were few also. It happened only in distant

¹ Th. Robertson, *Outlines of the General Report on the Size of Farms*, 1796, p. 2.

² Caird, *English Agriculture*, p. 481.

³ Robertson, *op. cit.* p. 3; *cp.* also p. 17.

⁴ Caird, *English Agriculture*, pp. 481 f.

⁵ Caird reckons the average holding at about 430 acres in the east, and 220 in the west.

mountain-valleys, as on the Scottish border in Cumberland and Westmorland, where Tremenhere found some such districts, occupied by a yeoman class, as late as 1869¹. The mountainous nature of the ground in this neighbourhood had prevented the introduction of arable farming, and in consequence the small holdings survived as little sheep and dairy-farms.

Consideration of the geographical distribution of large and small farms therefore leads to the same conclusion as the chronological study of their history. It shows a close connection between the use to which the land was put on the one hand and the size of the holding on the other. As the large farm system was found where conditions were favourable to corn-growing, and extended itself at a time when corn-growing played the chief part in agriculture, so the small farm system was destroyed at a time when market-gardening and pasture farming (as distinct from mixed husbandry) were unprofitable, and more particularly in those parts of the country where pasture and gardening were least favoured by Nature. Such is the theory deducible from a historical study of the question of the unit of agricultural holding in England. It was not, however, the theory which was developed by writers contemporary with the movement: and the theories which they did develop have been of sufficient importance in the general theory of political economy to demand some discussion.

(d) *Contemporary Views and Theories.*

Nothing is more common in economic history, and indeed nothing is more natural, than the deduction of general laws from certain remarkable phenomena. The contemporary student finds the doctrine that all things change a hampering one, and he ignores it. He must have laws and dogmas which will be good for all time. He overlooks the special circumstances which condition a phenomenon, and this short-sightedness enables him to draw out general principles which are not as a matter of fact contained in the phenomenon in question. So in this matter of the unit of holding. It was observed that the large farm system had continued to develop in England for more than a century, and it was concluded that the large farm was the best unit of agricultural holding. This was the theory of Arthur Young,

¹ *Report on the Employment of Women and Children*, 1868-9, p. 143:—"In the districts where tillage prevails they [small 'statesmen'] are singularly out of place." "The number of small farms is greater in Westmorland than in Cumberland in consequence of the great preponderance of pasture over arable land," etc.

Marshall, Sinclair, Low, etc.; and of the Germans who followed them, in particular Albrecht Thaer and Karl Marx.

Arthur Young wrote whole treatises on the question with a particular end in view. The rise of the large farm system and the social evils which followed in its train had awakened the indignation of the people at large and of the representatives of the consumers' interests. The whole development was attacked as a social evil. Young felt himself called to defend it as an economic good. He was the great eighteenth century representative of the interests of the agricultural producer. Now the large farm was undoubtedly the form of holding best suited to the then flourishing business of corn-growing. Young proved, and could prove, no more than that. His very method of classifying holdings, according to the number of ploughs employed¹, shows that his conception was limited to arable-farming. So far as this was concerned, he was able to show by arguments which are still valid that greater profits could be made on the large farm than on the small. But he did not stop there. What he had proved as regarded arable he extended to cover agriculture in general. He even formulated an exact size of holding as absolutely best, namely 1400 acres². Because he saw that the improved methods of arable farming had been best applied on large holdings, he fallaciously concluded that the large farm system had brought about those improvements. He overlooked the fact that they all had reference in the first place to the production of corn, whether the particular improvement in view was the drainage of wet lands, the use of machinery, or the breaking-up of bad pasture; that the increasing profitableness of corn-growing had first made such improvements worth while; and that the same profitableness of corn had led to the formation of the large farms, because on such farms both the particular improvements in view and the methods appropriate to corn-growing in general could produce the best results. So that it was not the large farms which made corn-growing pay, but on the contrary the rising price of corn which made the large farm pay. Young was quite right when, comparing large and small arable holdings, he concluded that the former unit was the more profitable. It was more economical in the use of horses and ploughs, and it had the advantage in the separation of management from manual labour, in the greater education possessed by the large farmer, and in his larger capital, which enabled him to introduce the new methods at a low

¹ *Rural Economy*, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 45; and so also W. Marshall, *On the Landed Property of England*, 1804, p. 144.

relative cost. In a word, it was the intensive application of capital which made the large farm the pattern of arable farming. So far as his arguments were directed to prove this, Young was quite correct. But he jumped from the conclusion that the large farm system was best for arable farming to the conclusion that it was absolutely best. He argued quite correctly that the small holding could never hope to compete with the large in the particular points named, depending as they did essentially on the free use of capital. But this did not prove what he adduced it to prove. For the advantages of the large farm system in relation to corn-production were no longer advantages when other branches of production, requiring quite different conditions, were in question. However, from 1760 onwards, these other branches were in fact a vanishing quantity in English agriculture: so that it was natural that scientific students of agrarian questions should pay little attention either to them or to the forms of holding suited to them. Young's followers neglect them almost to the same extent as he does himself. Sinclair does indeed point out that the small holding has certain advantages in the production of fruit and vegetables, and in dairy-farming¹: and at a later time Low admits that it could survive in the neighbourhood of large towns². But both these writers regard such cases simply as exceptions to the rule. Their argument is constantly directed to show what is absolutely the most profitable unit of agricultural holding, and as they identify agriculture with corn-growing they come to the conclusion that this unit is the large farm³. David Low goes so far as to say that the development of large farms is always a sign that agriculture is flourishing, while that of small farms shows the contrary: for as less capital is used on small farms than on large, an increase of the former must mean that less capital is flowing into agricultural channels⁴.

Thus the increased application of capital to corn-growing on the large farms led students to the conclusion that, in view of the growing importance of bringing corn-production to a high pitch of perfection, the large farm was the sole unit of agricultural holding which was worthy of attention. This view was apparently confirmed as improvements in the technique of arable farming on the one hand and

¹ Sir John Sinclair, *An Account of the Systems of Husbandry etc.*, Edinburgh, 1812, pp. 9 and 16 ff.

² David Low, *On Landed Property*, 1844, p. 35.

³ See Sinclair on the advantages of large farms and the disadvantages of small in *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1792, Vol. II, p. 319; V, 472; VIII, 613; X, 242, 265; XIV, 21; XV, 153; and III, 567; IV, 444; V, 212, 422; VI, 262, 378; VII, 143. Also *An Account etc.*, pp. 43 ff.

⁴ Low, *op. cit.* p. 38.

the rising price of corn on the other increased the demand for capital with which to purchase machinery or better tools, or to improve the soil. The evident connection between the application of science to arable farming and the formation of large holdings naturally led to the idea that the law of the unit of management was the same for agriculture (identified with corn-growing) as for industry. Improved methods meant in both cases that the smaller unit was replaced by the larger. "Why should the farming trade totally differ from all others?" asked Sinclair in his defence of the large farm system in 1793. Eighty-five years later, when agricultural machinery was still further developed, Caird pointed out that agricultural progress illustrated the same principles which had caused the power-loom to replace the hand-loom¹. The theory is also to be found in the Socialist writers Marx and Kautzsky. It was very natural that it should arise under the historical circumstances described above. The whole history of the development seemed to show that as methods improved large farms drove out small. The point overlooked was that the whole application of these improvements had been conditioned by the peculiar circumstances of the market, namely by the continually increasing profits on corn. No one realised that market conditions might so change as to favour other branches of production which were less dependent on improved technique. It was therefore no wonder that the theory of the absolute superiority of the large farm ruled between 1760 and 1880.

The opponents of this theory were quite as one-sided in their view as its defenders. The question of the unit of agricultural holding has always presented both an economic and a social problem; and these two distinct aspects governed the discussion of the question between 1760 and 1880 just as they do today. One set of writers set themselves to discover what size of holding would produce the best economic results, and having arrived at the conclusion that the large farm did so, proceeded to show by very weak arguments that it also had social advantages. Another set were primarily interested in social policy, and finding that the development of the large farm system was a social evil attempted to show that it was also an economic mistake. Marshall, in 1804, alludes to the two parties as consisting, the one of men "who have turned their attentions to agriculture," the other of persons "who live in towns²." The distinction is characteristic.

¹ *Statistical Account*, Vol. VIII, p. 613.

² Caird, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 2nd series, Vol. XIV (1878).

³ Marshall, *Landed Property*, p. 139.

"Men who live in towns" is a euphemism for persons who do not understand agriculture, an accusation often brought against the friends of small holdings both in the period in question and even now in districts where the large farm system is successful. The ground of the accusation is obvious. The defenders of small holdings championed them apparently in face of the clearest contradiction from the economic and agricultural conditions of their time. They regarded the consolidation of holdings as an evil occasioned by the ambition, covetousness and tyranny of certain individuals, and attempted to show theoretically that small holdings were not only socially desirable, but economically profitable. They argued from the particular holdings which they saw either vanishing or still surviving before their eyes. As the apologists of the large farm deduced their doctrine from the case of the corn-grower, so they discussed the live-stock, the dairies, the fruit and vegetables etc. of the small farm. They showed how the small holders had the advantage in the production of these "trifles," or "small objects." Nathaniel Kent, for instance, argued on these lines¹; and he fully realised the reason of their advantage. If the defenders of the large farmer pointed to his intensive application of capital, Kent showed how the small agriculturist, working for himself, worked "more cheerfully, zealously and diligently" than the wage-labourer would ever do. In other words, it is the intensive application of labour which he praises. And intensive application of labour did in fact give the small farm the advantage in the branches of production which he had in view. Cow-keeping, market-gardening, and dairy-work did require that care which was ensured by the personal interest of the small farmer but never given by the wage-labourer. The case was proved in practice by the general neglect of these branches of production on the part of the large farmers. So far Kent had as much right on his side as his opponents had from their own point of view. But, like them, he rashly generalised his conclusions. From the fact that the small farms were superior to the large in certain points he concluded that they were absolutely superior. Like Young and Marshall, he even proceeded to lay down a certain ideal division of an² estate, naturally allotting the lion's share to the small holders³. At a later date John Stuart Mill argued in a similar way³. He too belonged to the party

¹ Kent, *Hints*, pp. 213 f.

² *Ibid.*, p. 217. On an estate of £1000 a year, he would have one farm let at a rent of £160, one at £120, one at £100, two at £80, two at £60, two at £50, three at £40, and four at £30.

³ J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, 6th ed., 1855, pp. 180 ff.

which desired to prove that the social superiority of the small holding (or in his case the small property) was also an economic superiority, and regarded the personal interest of the small holder and his family as an advantage which quite overshadowed any gains arising from the division of labour as carried out on large farms. But he too overlooked the fact that though this intensive application of labour might be very valuable in regard of certain products it could not compensate for the intensive application of capital in the case of arable farming, which could be carried on to admiration by means of machinery and hired labour.

In this way there came to be two equally one-sided doctrines as to the unit of holding, both correct in some respects, but false when generalised. Both failed to take account of the fact that the development of the large unit of management, as it proceeded in agriculture from 1760 onwards, was only the means of bringing to perfection one branch of agricultural production, namely corn-growing, and later pasture-farming so far as it was combined with arable. Both neglected the peculiarity of the existing market conditions, which gave predominance to that particular branch of agriculture which could best be conducted on the large farm. But the history of the rise of the large farm system in England is the history of the increasing profitability of corn-growing. It was this which revolutionised the system of holdings, and brought about the ruin of the small farmers, the disappearance of the yeomanry and the destruction of the landholding labourers, replacing all these classes by the capitalist large farmer on the one hand, and an agricultural proletariat on the other. All attempts to counteract this process on social grounds failed hopelessly in face of its economic force. The theories in favour of small holdings put forward by social reformers were regarded as simply expressing a ridiculous failure to understand an economic development which a century's experience established as a general law of agriculture. The superiority of the large unit of holding had become an article of faith.

PART II

THE ECONOMICS OF LARGE AND SMALL HOLDINGS AT THE PRESENT DAY

CHAPTER IV

THE ALTERATION IN MARKET CONDITIONS AND ITS EFFECT ON PRODUCTION

THE agricultural development of almost all European countries has been very fundamentally affected by the cheapening and quickening of transport which has taken place in the last thirty years. The results to national economy might even be compared with those of Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea-route to the East Indies. As that brought the goods of the East to the western peoples at prices formerly impossible, so the recent improvements in navigation and the extension of the railway system have brought the chief necessary of life to the doors of every nation at an ever-decreasing price. Through these new transport conditions virgin lands in the United States, Canada, India and Russia have been brought under the plough, and their products have been placed at the disposal of countries whose growing populations oblige them to have resort to imported corn. This supply has been offered at continually decreasing cost, so that international corn-prices have fallen steadily; and thus the importing countries need no longer be dependent on the chances of the home harvest or those of one or two neighbouring countries: the price in the world market regulates that in the home market. Where customs duties have not prevented the close knitting of the home market into the international, the price of corn, as in England, has fallen much and rapidly. Taking the period 1879 to 1902, and disregarding the fluctuations of particular years, the fall in

corn-prices appears extraordinary. The prices per quarter were as follows¹:—

<i>Years</i>	<i>Wheat</i>	<i>Barley</i>	<i>Oats</i>
1877 to 1879:	49s.	37s. 11d.	24s.
1900 to 1902:	27s. 3d.	25s. 3d.	18s. 8d.

But besides the improvement in the means of transport, methods of transport have also made enormous progress. Not only can durable commodities be sent huge distances, but even animal food, whether in a natural or frozen condition, can be sent from one end of the earth to another. Consequently meat-prices have also fallen in all markets where foreign imports have been admitted. In England the poorer qualities of beef had fallen by 1894-5 to 40 per cent. below the prices of 1876-8, and the poorer qualities of mutton by 31 per cent.² The better qualities had also fallen in price, though not so much; viz. by 24 and 17 per cent. respectively. Taking the year 1900 as = 100, the following table shows the movement of prices in the twenty years 1883 to 1902 for wheat, flour and meat (irrespective of quality)³:—

<i>Year</i>	<i>Wheat</i>	<i>Flour</i>	<i>Beef</i>	<i>Mutton</i>
1883	154	161	125	120
1887	120	118	91	87
1891	137	129	101	97
1895	85	89	93	98
1899	95	99	93	94
1900	100	100	100	100
1901	99	97	94	91
1902	104	97	101	95

Thus a very marked fall in the price of all these agricultural products had taken place since 1880. From 1895 there was a slight rise both in wheat and meat-prices up to the year 1900, but nothing as compared with the fall already experienced: and the same is true of the rise of the last few years.

Such a change in prices inevitably shook the existing agricultural organisation to its foundations. Corn-growing became increasingly unprofitable, especially on the poorer soils. Stock-feeding too, so far as it was directed to the production of meat of anything except the best quality, brought only diminishing returns. The whole movement of the past hundred years, culminating as it had done in the

¹ *Agricultural Statistics*, 1903, p. 100.

² *Final Report of 1897*, pp. 46 and 49.

³ *Memoranda, Charts etc.*, p. 234.

wide extension of arable farming and later in the combination of this with meat-production, received as heavy a check as can well be imagined. The immediate effect of the drop in prices was a period of agricultural distress: to which lively expression was given before the Royal Commissions appointed in 1880 and 1894 respectively. The cause of the farmer's difficulties was clear. The rents at which they held their farms no longer corresponded to the profits obtainable from corn-growing¹. But it was natural that after so long a time of prosperity the demand for farms should not fall off as quickly as did the profits from them, and so that rents should not drop to the same degree as prices. Such a position, however, could only be maintained temporarily. When on many of the arable farms rents disappeared altogether² it was only a question of how long the farmers would continue to sacrifice their capital. In a short time numbers of farms were given up, and many of them remained unlet even at the lowest rents. This was more especially the case in the corn-growing eastern counties, Essex, Norfolk, Lincoln, Suffolk, etc. The area under corn showed a correspondingly rapid decrease, particularly the area under wheat and barley. In addition, the decrease in corn-growing necessitated a decrease in the green-crops taken in connection with it; turnips especially, which were an essential feature in the usual rotation, often could not be grown at a profit when corn had ceased to pay³. The following table illustrates the decrease in certain branches of agriculture between 1880 and 1909⁴:—

Area (in 1000 acres).

	Years 1881-85	1891-95	1896	1901	1909
Wheat	2563	1852	1609	1617	1734
Barley	1900	1767	1778	1635	1379
Beans	415	263	236	237	301
Peas	228	209	193	152	168
Turnips	1468	1388	1337	1144	1056
Flax	4	1	1	6	—
Hops	67	57	54	51	32

No doubt this fall in the production of crops hitherto so important

¹ See the *Final Report* of 1897, especially the sections *Farm Accounts*, *Rents as a Cause of Depression*, *Reductions Insufficient*, *Rents not reduced soon enough*.

² *Ibid.*

³ F. A. Channing, *The Truth about Agricultural Depression*, 1897, a reprint of his Minority Report as a member of the Commission of 1894:—"If the estimates of the cost of the four-course system and of the returns from roots and seeds are approximately correct, to make ends meet a return from the two corn crops is demanded, which is impossible at present prices," p. 68.

⁴ *Agricultural Statistics*, 1903, pp. 44 f., and 1909, Pt. I.

might have been prevented in England as elsewhere by the erection of high tariff walls. But after the experience which England had had of protection nothing of the kind was to be expected. Faith in Free Trade was rooted deep in the hearts of the people, and recent experience has shown how difficult it is to shake it. The landed interest, being in the minority, had to give way to the interests of the majority of consumers. Consequently a new agricultural order had to come into being. This could only consist in the development of those branches of production in which foreign competition was felt less or not at all, and putting them in the place of the branches which had now become unprofitable. To this end agriculturists increasingly directed their efforts after 1880. In fact, men who intended to continue to devote themselves to agriculture could not well do otherwise, in view of the impossibility of State help and the consequent necessity of self-help. And the possibility of achieving success in this direction was given by the changes which had taken place in market conditions.

The fall in the price of corn and of second and third quality meat ruined a great part of existing English agriculture. But it represented an inestimable advantage to the consumer. And in proportion to this advantage opportunities were created for replacing the old agricultural products, so far as they had become unprofitable, by new. As the price of bread and meat fell the purchasing power of wages rose, even where wages remained at the old level. But with the growing industrial prosperity of the country wages were rising considerably, and this not only in industrial or distributive employments. The wages of agricultural labour rose too, since labourers migrated increasingly from the land to the industrial districts, and so the supply of labour on the land constantly diminished. Nominal wages thus rising and the price of bread and meat falling, the increase in purchasing power must obviously have been large. The following table compares wages and the prices of the more important provisions from 1883 to 1902, the rates of 1900 being taken as = 100¹ :—

Year	<i>Wages (other than agricultural)</i>	<i>Wages (including agricultural)</i>	<i>Price of wheat and meat</i>
1883	84	85	133
1887	81	82	102
1891	91	91	111
1895	88	88	92
1899	95	95	95
1900	100	100	100
1901	98	98	97
1902	96	97	101

¹ *Memoranda, Charts etc.*, pp. 260 and 227.

These figures show clearly that the position of the working classes, regarded as consumers of bread and meat, had greatly improved since 1880.

What was saved on the more necessary articles of food could be expended on other commodities, whether provisions or industrial products. In the famine years of the Napoleonic wars white bread had been a luxury to the English labourer, and meat a delicacy of which he never dreamt. During the corn-law period white bread became his ordinary food, but meat remained a luxury. Under Free Trade bread and meat became his staple diet. But there remained many articles of fare which were still luxuries, and many still undreamt of by him. These it was which he began to consume after 1880. Chief of them were butter, new milk, fruit, poultry, eggs and vegetables. As the well-being of the people increased they came to form a regular and essential part of the labourer's diet. As Mr Graham put it¹, the man who forty years earlier had contented himself with a chop now expected a chicken, and whereas then only the well-to-do had dreamt of buying strawberries, millions of pounds were now consumed in the cottages of working men. The same was true of gooseberries, raspberries, apples and plums; and of tomatoes, cauliflowers and all other vegetables. Nor was the improvement in dietary confined to the labouring classes: it extended to those in the middle and upper ranks of society. The demand for meat of the best quality increased; in earlier times it had been a luxury enjoyed by comparatively few rich people. Cream, too, came into much commoner use, till today the foreign visitor will find hardly a middle-class household in which he will not be offered a jug of cream at afternoon tea, and that of a quality which he would rarely meet in Germany!

The growing demand for these particular products could only be partly met, and in some cases could not be met at all, from abroad. They offered a new field for home agricultural activity, now that the production of corn and to some extent of meat had ceased to be profitable.

The first point to be aimed at was improvement in stock-farming. The object was no longer to produce meat of medium quality, but meat of first-class quality, and also butter, cheese, new milk and cream. Pasture farming, instead of being combined with corn-growing, became an end in itself. Permanent pasture increased from

¹ P. Anderson Graham, *The Revival of English Agriculture*, 1899, p. 9.

11,000,000 acres in 1876 to 13,400,000 acres in 1902, and 13,900,000 acres in 1909¹, compensating for the decreased arable area. At the same time the number of cattle kept increased from an average of 4,075,520 between 1876 and 1880 to 4,611,937 in 1902 and 5,100,145 in 1909². Nor do these figures by any means express the total increase in the production of meat during those years. For the average weight of the living animal was very much increased, and also the fattening was done more quickly than had been the case previously; so that even if the yearly average of numbers had remained stationary, the production would really have been much greater than it had been thirty years earlier³. The number of horses kept had increased by more than 150,000 in 1909 as compared with the average of the years 1876 to 1880. The number of pigs remained more or less stationary up till the years when swine-fever raged, but showed some tendency to increase, especially when the danger of fever had been reduced. Sheep-farming did indeed experience a set-back. But, as Mr Rew has shown⁴, this was small in comparison with the set-back experienced in other European countries; and in this case too it is to be remembered that great improvements in feeding were made, and partly compensated for the decreased numbers.

Feeding was however far from being the only matter in which progress was made in the technique of stock-farming. Breeding in particular was greatly improved, as was indeed necessitated by the growing demand for meat of the best quality⁵. Whereas "in the days of prosperity," that is to say in the period of high corn-prices, farmers were said to have been "singularly ignorant or careless of the value of pedigree⁶"; now the breeding of herd-book stock became a more and more flourishing art, till English cattle-breeding was as much admired as English corn-growing had been at an earlier period. Nor was it directed merely to providing first-class meat for the home market. A demand for English pedigree cattle came from the great herds abroad which were producing for the European market; and as these countries were not suited for such breeding, the export trade to Canada, South America, the United States and elsewhere became an

¹ *Agricultural Statistics*, 1903, loc. cit. and 1909, Pt. I.

² *Ibid.*

³ R. H. Rew, *Recent Changes in the number of Cattle and Sheep in Great Britain*, in *Journal of the Farmers' Club*, 1903, pp. 45 f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵ A. T. Matthews, *Tenant Farmers as Breeders of Pedigree Stock*, in *Journal of the Bath and West and Southern Counties Society*, 1903, p. 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

important and increasing item. It increased enormously just after the great fall in corn and meat-prices, that is to say after 1880, as the following figures will show¹. They refer, however, only to the export of pedigree cattle certificated by breeding associations.

<i>Years</i>	<i>Pedigree horses</i>	<i>Do. cattle</i>	<i>Do. sheep</i>
1876-80	3606	626	2818
1881-85	6619	3048	5277
1896-1900	32,909	3335	8765

The value of the animals exported increased even more rapidly². In 1908 the United Kingdom exported 53,094 horses, 3895 head of cattle, 5919 sheep, and 700 swine. Since England imports meat and cattle of the poorer qualities these exports can only be of pedigree or herd-book stock or at any rate beasts of some special breed. Their value was about £1,000,000³. An industry which develops such an export trade obviously can no longer be conducted, as breeding once was, by amateurs for the sake of sport or luxury. It is in fact practised by capable farmers of all classes, and not for the sake of luxury, but for profit. The prices paid for herd-book cattle show how high these profits may be. The average price of short-horns sold at shows rose from £27. 15s. 10d. per head in 1898 to £36. 3s. 4d. in 1902⁴. Well-known breeders obtained prices which might seem incredible to foreigners. Some received an average of £70 for their short-horn cows, and sold their bulls abroad for £500 to £800. Pedigree Yorkshire pigs made £12 to £25 a head⁵. And breeders of pedigree cattle not only got higher prices than the ordinary farmer for their first-class beasts, but for all the cattle in their herd, even the least valuable, so long as they could be used for breeding purposes. Accordingly an increasing number of farmers devoted themselves to this profitable branch of agriculture, with what results may be seen in Mr (now Sir) F. A. Channing's Report of 1897⁶ and other authorities of the period⁷. In 1905 Mr Matthews wrote:—"The best hope for British graziers lies in improving the standard of quality,

¹ H. Levy, *Landwirtschaftlicher Export in England*, in *Conrad's Jahrbüchern*, 1903, p. 398.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Trade and Navigation Accounts*, 1908, pp. 238 f. and 116 f.

⁴ Cp. *The Times* of Dec. 7, 1903, p. 3.

⁵ The figures were given by Mr Philo Mills, a farmer of Ruddington, Notts.

⁶ *Final Report*, p. 254.

⁷ Cp. Matthews, op. cit. p. 3.

for first-rate home-fed beef is not likely to lose its present decided lead in comparative value¹."

A second sphere in which pasture farming was expanded and made much progress in method, was dairying. According to Mr Wrightson, "the keen interest now seen on all sides in the dairy arose after wheat ceased to be a profitable crop," and modern English butter-making may be dated from 1880². The cheapening of fodder contributed along with the increased consuming capacity of the masses to the extension of butter and cheese-making. But butter-making, for reasons which will be considered below, suffered from foreign competition. In the production of fresh milk and cream the English farmers possessed, on the contrary, the monopoly of the home market, and as the demand was increasing with the growing prosperity of the population, they found here compensation for the loss of the butter-market so far as they experienced it³. Dairy farming, on the whole at any rate, remained profitable even when agricultural distress was at its highest⁴, and accordingly the crisis was least felt in the traditional dairying districts, such as Cumberland, Dorset and Devon⁵.

But the transition to pasture farming pure and simple, whether in the form of the breeding of first-class stock for sale or for the meat market, or in the form of dairying, was not always easy to carry out. One difficulty was in the conservatism of the farmers themselves. Many of them could not accommodate themselves at all to the new conditions. They were accustomed to high arable farming, and were quite unable to make up their minds to give it up in favour of pasture. Land of poor quality was kept too long under the plough, whereas if it had been at once laid down for grass much loss would have been avoided⁶. But in many cases the transition to pasture farming could not be made without loss. "Break a pasture, make a man," had been the old saying. Now it was: "To make a pasture breaks a man." To turn poor corn-lands once more into pasture was

¹ A. T. Matthews, *Position and Prospects of Stock Farming*, in *Journal of the Bath and West and Southern Counties Society*, 1905, p. 17.

² John Wrightson, *The Agricultural Lessons of the Eighties*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1890, p. 279.

³ Rew, *op. cit.* p. 43.

⁴ James Long, *A Handbook for Farmers and Small Holders*, 1892, p. 44:—"The dairy farm has admirably withstood the strain of competition, and dairy farmers have maintained their position as successful agriculturists better than any of the larger classes of the farmers of this country."

⁵ *Final Report*, p. 229.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

much more difficult and costly than the reverse process had been. At best the farmer had to wait for results, and this necessity ruined many, whose capital had already been lessened by the fall in corn-prices. Often, too, they were ruined by their want of foresight and of capacity for managing a pasture farm, which is quite correctly regarded as an art in itself¹. The actual laying down to grass was often done in the most careless way, so that good results could not be expected². And if the land were unsuited, e.g. for geological reasons, for permanent pasture, the English farmer had small idea of any other methods of carrying on cattle farming. The consequence of all these personal difficulties was that the extension of either branch of pasture farming was much delayed, and that the farmers suffered heavy losses³. Where such difficulties were not present it proved possible, to the great advantage of the agriculturist, to carry out the changes in face of the most adverse external conditions. The history of the Scottish farmers who, at the invitation of some of the landlords, settled in England at this period is most instructive⁴. They came to the counties which as purely corn-producing districts had suffered most under the falling prices: viz., Essex, Norfolk, Kent, Hertfordshire and others in the east and south-east. They brought with them the peculiar Scottish power of accommodation to all circumstances, They also brought a preference for cows, grass and turnips, as against the prejudice of the Essex farmers in favour of corn and long fallows. They understood how to handle pasture better than did the Englishmen. Where permanent pasture was not suitable, they introduced convertible husbandry, using a field as pasture for some years and then ploughing it up. This proved most successful in the eastern counties⁵, and contributed greatly to the development of dairy farming as it is now practised in Essex and other counties. From the time of the Scottish invasion the production of butter and fresh milk has increased enormously in districts which were previously in great

¹ R. Hunter Pringle, *Reports on Ongar, Chelmsford etc.*, 1894, p. 131.

² J. P. Sheldon, *The Future of English Agriculture*, 1893, p. 4:—"Unfortunately, however, it is only too true that a great deal of such land has not been laid down at all—has simply been allowed to lay itself down, and it is of very little use as it is: weeds, weeds, nothing but weeds on much of it."

³ *Final Report*, pp. 258 f.

⁴ Pringle, *op. cit.*, should be consulted for the story of the Scottish farmers, if for nothing else. See pp. 43 ff., and *passim*.

⁵ See an article by Mr Graham in the *Morning Post* of April 11, 1903, on *The Revival of Agriculture*, under the head *Dairy Farming*. For the success of the Scottish farmers even in the worst time of the crisis, cp. Pringle, *op. cit.* pp. 43 f., 45, 60; also the *Report of 1894*, qu. 13,890-13,896.

distress, and the farmers became comparatively well-to-do¹. Surely, if slowly², the Englishmen decided to adopt the system of the Scottish immigrants, and pasture farming made its way in a district where according to tradition it was quite impossible.

But pasture farming, in these two great branches, was not the only sphere of production in which English agriculture became active as corn-prices fell. A second was offered by the growing consumption of fruit and vegetables, eggs and poultry.

Unfortunately the statistics dealing with market gardening and poultry farming leave much to be desired. The *Statistical Abstracts* cease to mention "market gardens" after 1896. Up to that time they showed a considerable increase. "Market gardens" covered an area of 96,000 acres in 1896, as compared with 37,000 in 1878: and "nursery gardens" had increased by about 1000 acres in the same period³. Gardens and orchards together covered 165,000 acres in 1878, 225,000 acres in 1897, and 250,000 acres in 1908⁴. These figures are for Great Britain. The statistics provided by the Board of Agriculture particularise only the area under bush or tree fruits. This was, for England only, 78,124 acres in 1909 as against an average of 37,068 in the period 1886-1890⁵. And in fruit cultivation as in pasture farming, a mere statement of areas fails to do justice to the progress made. For as Mr W. E. Bear pointed out in an article in the *Journal* of the Royal Agricultural Society⁶, "in consequence of the introduction of improved varieties of fruit and the better cultivation and treatment of plantations, the production per acre has become much greater than it was twenty years ago." Here again technical progress began when foreign competition began. As Mr Graham remarked, it gave a fillip to the Kentish fruit farmers and led to the improvement of their methods⁷. Strawberries, raspberries, and gooseberries were in great demand in the towns, and were grown in increasing quantities. The forcing of fruit also became a flourishing business.

¹ Graham, *loc. cit.*, ascribes the "new prosperity of the farmers of Essex" to the adoption of dairy farming. Cp. also Primrose McConnell, *Experiences of a Scotsman on the Essex Clays*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1891, pp. 312, 323.

² For the obstinacy with which some agriculturists clung to the old traditions, cp. the *Report* of 1894, qu. 13,916-13,921.

³ Levy, *Die Not etc.*, pp. 130 f.

⁴ *Statistical Abstracts*, 1909, pp. 290 f.

⁵ *Agricultural Statistics*, 1909, Pt. 1, p. 23.

⁶ W. E. Bear, *Flower and Fruit Farming*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1899, p. 31.

⁷ Graham, *op. cit.* p. 144.

As to vegetable growing there is still less statistical information, though some of the figures already quoted include vegetable gardens. Potatoes covered almost 100,000 acres more in 1909 than they had done from 1876-1880¹. Forcing developed rapidly in this sphere also, especially in the growing of tomatoes and cucumbers under glass². Market gardening was in fact being extended in almost all parts of the country, but especially in Kent, and next in Worcestershire and Cambridgeshire³. Whole districts were devoted to it. Nor were these districts only in the neighbourhood of great markets: in some of them the means of communication did not at all seem to favour the development. Thus the Isle of Axholme, in Lincolnshire, which lay almost outside the railway network, was particularly successful with potatoes and celery. Some of the districts had been even quite recently regarded as unfit for any such purpose. Essex, for example, though so close to London, had hitherto been devoted almost exclusively to corn. Now the corn-fields, or fields which had actually been left uncultivated in consequence of the falling price of corn, were turned into market gardens, and their produce brought excellent prices in the easily-reached markets of London and its suburbs⁴. The high rents paid for garden lands prove how profitable this branch of agriculture has become⁵. While corn lands now hardly ever bring over £2 an acre, and more often only 15s. to 25s., £2 is a very low rent for land devoted to horticulture. I visited market gardens in the neighbourhood of Coventry paying as much as £5 to £10 an acre. Nor is this the maximum. Some orchards in the Vale of Evesham and its neighbourhood pay £18⁶: while in Hampshire, where 30,000 acres are now devoted to strawberry growing, the land is often worth £200 an acre for this purpose, whereas for arable farming it had brought in only 10s. to £1 per annum⁷.

¹ *Agricultural Statistics*, 1909, p. 23.

² Bear, *op. cit.* pp. 267-9:—"No other industry connected with land has shown such great expansion in this country during the last thirty years, and especially the last twenty, as the cultivation of fruit and flowers under glass for market." Then follow reports as to the progress of this industry in various districts.

³ Graham, *op. cit.* pp. 10, 142 ff.

⁴ Cp. Mr Graham's *Morning Post* article:—"Many acres (in Essex) which formerly were derelict have now been taken up and turned into market gardens."

⁵ Examples of this at the worst period of the crisis are to be found in the *Report* of 1894, qu. 12,667: also 5540, 5756.

⁶ *Final Report*, p. 254.

⁷ J. C. Newsham, *Strawberry Growing in Hampshire*, in *Journal of the Board of Agriculture*, June 1909, p. 186.

As regards poultry farming, figures are unfortunately almost entirely lacking. Mr E. Brown, of the National Poultry Organization Society, however, has estimated that the number of fowls in England increased from 15·9 millions in 1885 to 18·3 millions in 1902, and that the value of the eggs annually produced is about 3·9 million pounds, while the chickens, ducklings, geese and turkeys annually produced are worth 2·4 million pounds¹. Other authorities on the subject state that poultry farming has vastly increased²; in some districts by as much as 100 per cent. in a few years³. It has been developed with particularly good success in Sussex, according to Mr Rew's Report to the Royal Commission of 1894⁴. The rising price paid for fresh eggs in the large towns is an indication of its increasing profitability⁵. Examples of flourishing poultry businesses recently built up are given by Mr Rider Haggard in his *Rural England*⁶.

To sum up, a change in agricultural production proceeded hand in hand with the change in market conditions. The falling price of corn and of meat of the second and third qualities put an end to the mixed husbandry which had prevailed since the abolition of the corn-laws. On the other hand the market for certain hitherto neglected agricultural products improved, so as increasingly to compensate agriculturists for their losses. Falling prices meant an increased purchasing-power of wages, and in almost all classes a new demand developed for such animal products as butter, cheese, new milk, eggs and poultry; while the demand for meat of a high quality also rose considerably. This state of things gradually proved to be advantageous to British agriculture. Stock-breeding, dairying, horticulture and poultry farming all developed from an embryonic state to marvellous technical perfection.

¹ *Report on the Supply of Food and Raw Material in Time of War*, 1905, Vol. III, pp. 289, 290, 293.

² Graham, *Revival etc.*, p. 10:—"Poultry keeping has extended enormously."

³ See an article by a recognised authority on this subject, Mr E. Brown, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1900, p. 607:—"More fowls are kept by farmers and cottagers than was ever the case before...At a village in the Craven district of Yorkshire I was told that fowls have multiplied twenty-fold...the number of fowls has increased in the ratio of two to three, and the production of marketable eggs and poultry as two to four," etc.

⁴ Rew, *Report* (to the Commission of 1894) *on the Poultry rearing and fattening Industry*, 1895, p. 4 and passim.

⁵ See *Wholesale and Retail Prices*, 1903, p. 297. Cp. also *Poultry Notes*, in *Estate Book*, 1907, p. 202:—"Owing to the continued low price of grain and meal, flocks of fowls can be kept at an inclusive cost of 5s. each a year, while the price of eggs continues steady."

⁶ H. Rider Haggard, *Rural England*, 1902, Vol. II, e.g. p. 478 (Norfolk). Cp. also the evidence of the Scottish farmer Dewar, in the *Report* of 1894, qu. 31,783-31,787.

This technical progress corresponded to a revival of agricultural prosperity. People had long been accustomed to think of agriculture as distressed: but now all the signs pointed the other way, as was already shown in 1899 by Mr P. Anderson Graham's book, *The Revival of English Agriculture*, which has been frequently quoted above. Mr Graham found his views confirmed by his tour in Essex in 1903. Mr A. Wilson Fox stated in that same year that "men of large experience in the agricultural districts" had told him that farming was "getting on to a sounder basis¹." Nothing more was heard about an agricultural crisis. Thus a large Gloucestershire landowner, Mr G. E. Lloyd-Baker², assured me, in the year 1903, that in all parts of the country known to him there was a definite upward movement to be remarked in agriculture.

The same tendency has most distinctly manifested itself in the last few years. An official Report of the year 1909 speaks of the "increased prosperity of agriculture during the last few years," and states that "the demand for farms is keener at the present time than it has been for many years past, and there has been a corresponding appreciation in the value of agricultural land³." One of the greatest experts on agricultural conditions, Mr R. A. Yerburgh, M.P., said a short time ago that "If the average farmer were asked what were the present prospects in England, he would probably reply 'Well, not so bad as they might be.' The proverbial pessimism of his class would not allow him to go further than that; but in the mouth of a farmer it means that agriculture has travelled very far from the black days of depression⁴."

A new stage of development has been reached, or rather, perhaps, there has been a return to the branches of production which had been most flourishing at an earlier period. For the first time in more than a century corn growing has lost its pre-eminence. It has now to make way for commodities which it had once swept almost out of existence. Pasture farming and small culture have gained the upper hand.

¹ Wilson Fox, in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1903, p. 321.

² H. Levy, *Die Lage der englischen Landwirtschaft in der Gegenwart*, in *Conrad's Jahrbüchern*, December 1903.

³ *Annual Report of Proceedings under the Small Holdings Act*, 1909 (Cd. 4846), p. 5.

⁴ *Warwick Advertiser*, May 7th, 1910.

CHAPTER V

THE UNIT OF HOLDING UNDER THE NEW CONDITIONS

THE period of almost a hundred and twenty years of predominant corn-production had witnessed a development of agricultural holdings which closely corresponded to the peculiarities of that branch of agriculture. With the remarkable transformation of agricultural production since about 1880, the unit of holding has undergone changes no less revolutionary in character. But before these can be described, it is necessary to classify the various types of holding to be found in England at the present day. A scientific basis for such a classification is by no means easy to find. Even Arthur Young avoided the obvious error of founding it on mere area: but the distinguishing mark which he adopted, viz. the number of ploughs or horses employed, was not much less mechanical. No one, however, seems as yet to have done much better.

Fortunately there appears to be no need to establish a perfect classification, such as would prove adequate for all possible purposes. The distinction adopted here will have reference only to certain marks which, though not belonging strictly to certain types of holding and to them alone, do serve adequately to characterize such types. They concern the holding first as a source of income and secondly as a field of activity for its occupier.

In the first place there are many holdings distinguished from all others by the fact that the occupier neither draws his whole income from them nor gives his whole time to them. These are perhaps best classed under the well-known name of *allotment holdings*, though they include a good number which are larger than the allotment properly so-called. The point is that they are of such a size that they cannot¹ either fully employ their occupier nor provide him and

¹ The occupier of a large farm is often also neither fully employed by it nor confined to it for his income. But in his case there is the possibility of finding full employment and full subsistence on his holding, and this is what is lacking in the case of the allotment.

his family with a full subsistence. He either has another employment or holds some capital and makes up his income from the interest on it. The occupiers of such holdings are mostly agricultural labourers, but also small shop-keepers or inn-keepers, industrial workers and artisans, little property-owners, and so forth. The holdings may be divided into two main types: viz. those which are not, and those which are, the chief support of their occupiers. Allotments properly so-called belong to the first type, though they do not exhaust it. The second type produce more for the market than do the first, on which production is as a rule mainly for the occupier's own consumption. But they must be distinguished from small holdings whose occupiers occasionally go out to work. The allotment holder goes out to work because he must; small holders may occasionally go out when opportunity offers to earn an agreeable supplement to their incomes. Finally, on both types of allotment holding the whole family takes part in the work and hired labour is not employed.

The allotment holdings merge into the second class, which is that of the *small holding* proper. Here the occupier is normally fully occupied and expects to make the full subsistence of his family, though he may on occasion do a day's work elsewhere. If he has a large family, say one or two grown-up sons and perhaps a daughter, he will need to employ hardly any outside labour, unless at special times such as hay or potato-harvest or for fruit-picking. Such employment will be purely exceptional. This was the type of holding on which the little farmers and smaller yeomanry of the eighteenth century lived, and which to so great an extent vanished in the nineteenth century.

The other classes are those of the medium-sized and large farms. The characteristic of the *medium-sized farm* is that the occupier needs to employ wage-labour, while at the same time he himself and as a rule his family also takes part in the actual work of the farm. But a certain division between manual labour and the work of organisation is here visible, for while the occupier is partly busied in the actual work he also at times simply directs it. This division becomes clearly established on the *large farm*, where a number of wage-labourers on the one side are directed by the farmer on the other. The occupier is no longer in a position to take part in the work himself: his time is fully taken up with supervision and organisation. If his wife and daughters take any part at all, it is also only supervisory, as of dairy-maids or milkers, or of the feeding of

the poultry, etc., supposing that dairying or poultry farming is carried on for the market on a large scale.

If this classification is valid it is evident that there will be to a certain extent external marks of similarity between the holdings of each particular class. Such marks, however, are very hard to define. For instance, as regards the average area of the holdings, the allotment holdings will as a rule include all holdings of less than an acre. But even those of the first type, where the allotment is a mere by-employment, may often cover as much as two or three acres. The famous holding of "three acres and a cow" belongs to this type. On the other hand a holding of a similar area may belong to the second type, being the main, though not the sole, source of income and employment. This is more especially the case in market-gardening districts. The line between these enlarged allotments and the small holding proper is very hard to draw. Whether the occupier of a given area will or will not need to supplement his income by some by-employment will depend on the most various circumstances; as for example on the quality of the soil, the branch of production adopted, the number of mouths in the family, and so forth. Where fruit and vegetables are grown five acres may suffice to enable their holder to live very comfortably¹. The same is sometimes the case where dairying is the object². But as a rule a larger area is required for a self-sufficing pasture farmer, and the border between allotments and small holdings may lie as high as at 10, 20 or even 25 acres. This is the case in such grass counties as Herefordshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire etc.³ In arable districts the line must be drawn even higher. In the Isle of Axholme 50 or 60 acres was regarded as the minimum necessary for a thriving arable farmer having no by-employment. The outward appearance of a small holding may thus vary greatly, and it is evident that mere statistics tell very little as to the economic

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 5887.

² Mr P. Pettitt's farm, Hilden Park Dairy, Tonbridge, Kent, is or was such an one. He held in 1903 five acres of pasture, and kept (of course using stall-feeding) 10—12 cows, doing all the work himself with the aid of his son and two daughters.

³ Stirton, *op. cit.* p. 93:—"Experience has shown that a pasture holding of fifteen to twenty acres is sufficient to furnish the entire means of livelihood to one family." Also W. E. Bear, *A Study of Small Holdings*, p. 44:—"Several authorities on the subject declared that a family could live comfortably...on 20 acres, without working for wages." See also *Report of 1894*, Vol. 1, qu. 5106, 5109, 5207 ff. (Mr G. Murray on Derbyshire):—"If he had 16 acres he would keep four cows, and he would occupy his whole time, and would not work to earn any rent outside his own occupation." See also qu. 5585; 4427; 346½ etc.

classification of holdings¹. It is perhaps even harder to draw the line between small and medium holdings and between medium and large. The boundary in the first case would seem to lie as a rule at somewhere between 100 and 150 acres. Here the farmer regularly employs some hired labour, and therefore does some purely directive work, although his main business may still be with the actual manual labour, since the number of men he employs will be small.

A few words must be added as to the peculiar distinction commonly drawn in England between a "working farmer" and a "gentleman farmer." It might be supposed that the gentleman farmer was identical with the occupier of the fourth class, that is of the large farm, such occupiers having no time for actual manual labour. This, however, is not the case. The small farmer is as a matter of course a working farmer: but the distinction as drawn has reference to two different types of large farmer. On two neighbouring large farms of similar area carrying on similar work, using the same methods and employing the same number of men, one occupier may be a "gentleman farmer" and the other a "working farmer." The first rides, hunts and pursues various kinds of sport, as do also his sons, while his wife enters local society and his daughters learn music and painting. The working farmer is to be found with his sons in the field among his men, probably in his shirtsleeves, and his wife and daughters help with the milking, in the dairy or with the poultry. Pipes, cider and wooden chairs take the place of cigars, wine and drawing-room furniture. The gentleman farmer is in fact a legacy from the old days when agricultural prosperity was such as to allow farmers to live at a very high standard of comfort, and under modern conditions his day seems over. "When prices were high," writes Mr Anderson Graham², "the gentleman farmer could afford to indulge in the comforts and luxuries to which he had been accustomed. Nowadays the margin of profit is too fine to admit of these extravagances." "There is no doubt about the fact that gentlemen farmers are in greater tribulation than they ever were before. Unless they are prepared to lose an annual sum for the privilege of living in the country and following this agreeable occupation, they are entirely out of place. When it is said that Northumberland is prosperous it

¹ A great deal of material for the solution of this question of the classification of holdings according to size is to be found in the *Report on Small Holdings, 1906, Minutes of Evidence* (Cd. 3278). Cp. *Index*, pp. 530 and 531-2, and especially the heading *Self-supporting Holding*.

² Graham, *The Revival etc.*, pp. 115, 113.

is with the reservation that they are excepted¹." The working farmer, on the contrary, flourishes², and especially the Scottish immigrants, who, as one of them said to the present writer, work like any day-labourer. Mr Pringle noted this fact as among the causes of the success of the Scottish farmers, and it marks them wherever they are found in England.

It will now be clear that the large farm is not to be defined as one where the occupier does not take part in the manual labour. But he is occupied in the first place with the work of organisation. Moreover even his manual work is distinguishable from that done by the occupier of a medium-sized farm. The latter is to some extent simply in the position of an additional labourer on his holding. Without his work the business would not be got through at all. The large farmer, on the other hand, does indeed need to put his own hand to the work in view of the present-day requirements of more continuous activity, more careful attention to details, and more economical methods. Especially at harvest time he must be on the spot and give active assistance. But his personal share in the work is only occasional. Here and there he acts as foreman: here and there he does a job which he does not care to entrust to hired labour. Even his manual work is really of the nature of supervision. It is direction in deed as well as in word. It is supplementary to the work of the labourers, not of the same kind with it.

It follows from what has already been said that it is vain to attempt to draw conclusions as to the economic character of a holding from any exterior marks, and more especially from its mere area. On the other hand it is necessary to combine some economic conception with the statistical information supplied. Making all allowance for exceptions it may therefore be useful to sum up as follows. Allotments proper, which are only a by-employment to their occupier, will as a rule cover from $\frac{1}{4}$ to 4 acres: allotment holdings of the larger kind from 5 to 10 acres. Small holdings may be taken as covering from 10 to 80 or 100 acres. Holdings of 100 to 250 or 300 acres will be medium-sized farms, and all above that size will be large farms. But such a classification must not be used

¹ Cp. the interesting evidence of Mr Carrington Smith, himself a farmer, in the *Report* of 1894, qu. 8038; 8105-8117.

² Pringle, op. cit. pp. 45 f.; see also H. Levy, *Die Lage der englischen Landwirtschaft in der Gegenwart*, in *Conrad's Jahrbüchern*, 1904, pp. 734 ff. In the *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, the Scottish farmers are described as "an exceptionally energetic and successful race." *Minutes*, qu. 7225.

without the clearest perception of its inevitable weaknesses. If this is understood it may be worth while to compare the classification adopted on economic grounds, as described above, with the corresponding statistics as given in 1895¹. There were then :

Holdings of over	1 and not over	5 acres	Percentage of Total Holdings	Percentage of Area
			22·9	1·07
"	"	5 " " 20 "	28·45	4·87
"	"	20 " " 50 "	16·42	8·36
"	"	50 " " 100 "	12·25	13·70
"	"	100 " " 300 "	15·88	42·00
"	"	300 " " 500 "	2·92	16·86
"	"	500 " " 1000 "	1·04	10·35
"	"	1000	0·14	2·79
			100	100

The contrast between the two series of percentages is interesting. While that relating to the number of holdings decreases as the size of holding increases, that relating to the area covered moves almost in the opposite direction. Further, so far as numbers are concerned, small holdings preponderate. Holdings up to 100 acres make 80·12 per cent. of the whole. But as regards area it is otherwise. Medium holdings account for 42 per cent. of the whole area covered, and medium and large holdings together for 72 per cent. So that the land under cultivation was at that date still predominantly held in large and medium holdings. But if taken in connection with earlier statistics, the figures would indicate the beginning of a new development ; they belong to a period when the old tendency to the consolidation of holdings was not merely at an end, but was being replaced by a contrary movement.

Up to 1880 the question of the proper size of holdings was regarded as settled. Landlords aimed at enlarging their farms as far as possible. The few social reformers who were in favour of small holdings failed to get a hearing in face of the economic conditions. But as corn growing ceased to pay the case was altered, and the question came up again as one for serious discussion². The

¹ For the sake of simplicity the sources of the statistics used in the following pages and in Appendix II are given here. They are as follows:—*Agricultural Returns for 1885*; *Returns of Allotments and Small Holdings, 1890*; and *Returns as to the Number and Size of Agricultural Holdings in Great Britain in the year 1895*.

² Cp. e.g. R. Scott Burn, *Systematic Small Farming, 1886*, p. 14:—"In looking back at a period of a few years ago, it will be seen that, so far as the general public was con-

year 1880 marks the beginning of a revival of small holdings. To this revival two tendencies contributed; first, the economic interests of individual agriculturists; secondly, a movement of social reformers. The second is of least importance, and may be dismissed in a few words.

Social reformers had never ceased to take a lively interest in this matter. It had never been possible to defend the large farm system on social grounds, though Arthur Young and Sir John Sinclair had attempted to counter the attacks of its opponents. But from Dr Price up to the Labourers' Friend Society's agitation for allotments, and from John Stuart Mill on to the present day, the small holding has always found enthusiastic champions in view of its social advantages. With the changed conditions after 1880 came the Radical agitation in favour of such holdings, led by Mr Joseph Chamberlain and Mr Jesse Collings. A Select Committee was appointed to consider the matter in 1889, and Mr Collings expressly claimed that it should regard in the first place the social rather than the economic side of the question¹. The particular aim in view, more especially among the Liberals, was to hinder the increasing migration of the rural population to the towns, a point which will be considered below.

The results achieved by this social movement were, first, that certain landlords let their land in small farms expressly because such holdings were socially beneficial. Lord Tollemache and Lord Wantage were pioneers in so doing, and a little later Lord Carrington, whose Willow Tree Farm was let to a syndicate of small holders. In the second place the formation of syndicates and co-operative associations for renting land and letting it out in small holdings and allotments is to be noted. The Land Reformers of this period, too, agitated in favour of small holdings and contributed to their formation.

In the third place the State took action in favour of a revival of

cerned, the question of small farms occupied but a small part of their interest. It was, indeed, a topic which was but seldom heard, still less frequently discussed, in any way approaching to that in which a question is considered to which the term 'popular' is attached." And p. 13:—"Of late, and it would be more correct to say very recently, the subject has been again revived, and its points discussed by those who, having more influence than those concerned in the old controversies, are likely to impart their views to the public in a more telling way than has yet been done."

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 134, and 135:—"I think the social question, as distinct from the economic one, is a question primarily worthy the consideration of this Committee and Parliament."

peasant properties, small farms and allotments, also on purely social grounds, as in the Allotments and Small Holdings Act, 1892, the forerunner of the Small Holdings Act of 1907. The earlier Act was due first and foremost to the energy of Mr Jesse Collings, then still a member of the Radical party. Since the early eighties he had moved almost every year for an enquiry into the small holdings question. In 1889 he brought in a Bill containing a detailed scheme for their revival by means of the local authorities. In the same year the Select Committee was appointed, and in 1892 his Bill, with unimportant alterations, became law. Social reformers hoped much from it: especially that, as the President of the Board of Agriculture (Mr Chaplin) pointed out, it might hinder the rural exodus¹. The Radicals looked to the systematic creation of peasant properties to put an end to the land-monopoly of the great landlords. The Conservative Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, favoured the Bill, because, as he said, "I believe that a small proprietary constitutes the strongest bulwark against revolutionary change, and affords the soundest support for the Conservative feeling and institutions of the country²."

Private effort, political agitation and Government action were thus all active in promoting the formation of small holdings on social grounds from 1880 onwards. But the reader will remember that such attempts were nothing new: and there is no probability that they would have produced more effect at the end of the nineteenth century than they had done in its fourth decade or at its beginning, if the position had not been altered in an essential point. The arguments of the social reformer were no longer in blank opposition to the actual economic tendencies of the day. On the contrary, by the side of his rather timid efforts there now arose a strong movement for the creation of small holdings on purely economic grounds. This movement it was which made the question as to the proper unit of holding once more a real question; and to it, therefore, the main attention of the historian is due.

It proceeded naturally in the first instance from the landlords, who found that, if their rents were to be kept up, they must cease to consolidate farms and on the contrary must cut up the large holdings as opportunity offered. After 1880 this tendency becomes increasingly evident³. The Report of the Select Committee of 1889 states:

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 911.

² Speech at Exeter, on Feb. 3rd, 1892, quoted in Shaw Lefevre, *op. cit.* p. 85.

³ E.g. *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 4005, where the land-agent Mr Squarey says:—

this clearly, and also points out how contrary the movement was to current traditions. "As regards small tenancies, the diminution "has been chiefly due to the practice of consolidating farms which "prevailed almost universally for a generation previous to the recent "agricultural depression. This policy was formerly enjoined on the "landowners on economical grounds. It was pointed out that the "expense of keeping buildings in repair is much greater in proportion "in small than in large farms, and that the employment of machinery "and of the best agricultural methods is facilitated by the single "management and cultivation of a large area. The contention was "that small husbandry was barbarous and antiquated like the process "of handloom weaving, and agriculture, like manufactures, should be "carried on on a large scale and under the most scientific conditions. "These views have been partly modified by recent experience, and "many landowners and agents would gladly revert to the system of "smaller farms, and they are doing so where it is practicable¹." The same is true under still more recent conditions².

The statistics collected in 1895 show that the Committee of 1889 rightly interpreted the evidence before them. The following table gives the figures of that year as compared with those collected previously³. The number of holdings was:—

Year	½ and under 1 acre	1—5 acres	5—20 acres	20—50 acres	50—100 acres	100—300 acres	300—500 acres	500—1000 acres	over 1000 acres
1880	295,313				44,602	58,677	11,617	4095	500
1885	21,069	103,229	109,285	61,146	44,893	59,180	11,452	4131	565
1890	25,680	109,528	101,039	62,131	—	—	—	—	—
1895	—	101,428 ³	108,145	62,446	46,574	60,381	11,112	3942	524

"Every landowner would be only too happy to convert his land into small holdings." So also Mr Jesse Collings, *ibid.* qu. 50, 51 ff. Cp. also Shaw Lefevre, *op. cit.* p. 30:—"Many landlords have had reason to regret that they were induced in preceding years to consolidate their small farms into larger holdings, and would gladly revert to times when a much greater proportion of small holdings existed." Also Channing, *op. cit.* p. 297:—"There has been a tendency to divide large farms."

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Small Holdings, 1890, p. vi.*

² *Report on Small Holdings, 1906, p. 4.* In face of the conclusions of this *Report*, based on information from the most various sources, Dr Hasbach's statement (*op. cit.* p. 361), that landowners continue to enlarge holdings, is quite incomprehensible.

³ The figures are taken from the official agricultural statistics (*viz. the Agricultural Returns*). Those for holdings of 1—5 acres in 1895 are obtained by adding the number given in the *Report* for holdings "over 1 and not over 5 acres" to the number of holdings of one

The most striking point in these statistics is perhaps the decrease in the number of large and very large holdings between 1885 and 1895. This is the more significant as the largest holdings (500 acres and over) had still been increasing between 1880 and 1885. The holdings of 300—500 acres, on the other hand, show a decrease from 1880 onwards. The medium-sized holdings (100—300 acres) show an increase from 1880: and the small holdings proper (50—100 and 20—50) show a steady and considerable increase throughout the period. It is noticeable, however, that holdings of 1—5 acres show a decrease in 1895 as compared with five years earlier, while the next group does not exhibit any steady development at all.

In considering the more recent statistics it is evident at once that the classification has unfortunately been altered. Only four groups are distinguished. The number of holdings was¹ :—

Year	over 1 and not over 5 acres	over 5 and not over 50 acres	over 50 and not over 300 acres	over 300 acres
1895	87,055	170,591	106,955	15,578
1905	81,232	166,622	109,498	14,792
1909	80,195	165,661	109,768	14,642

These figures certainly show that large holdings have considerably decreased and medium holdings very considerably increased within the past fifteen years. But they also show, what is at first sight surprising, that holdings of 1—50 acres have not only failed to increase, but have actually decreased in the period in question. This statistical result might seem to point to the conclusion that the movement in favour of small holdings had experienced a set-back after 1895. But such a conclusion is not warranted by the facts.

The main factor in determining the number of small holdings is no doubt the increase or decrease caused by the cutting up or throwing together of farms on grounds of agricultural economy. But another, and not inconsiderable, influence is the amount of agricultural land annually absorbed by the spread of the towns or manufacturing districts, which are continually penetrating further

acre precisely, which for that year was 14,373. The alteration made in 1895 in the method of classifying these holdings of 1—5 acres would have made a comparison with the figures of former years impossible, if the supplementary figures had not been specially obtained. I am greatly indebted to Mr Henry Rew, of the Board of Agriculture, for supplying me with them.

¹ *Agricultural Statistics, 1909, Pt. 1, pp. 70 f.*

and further into the country. As the agricultural holdings in the neighbourhood of the towns are mostly small, a considerable proportion of the total number of small holdings must be annually affected in this way: and the loss is naturally felt proportionately more severely in England, which has altogether only about 245,000 holdings of 1—50 acres, than it is, for instance, in Germany, with its 15 millions. It is true that holdings of 1—5 acres are the most liable to disappear in this way; but holdings of 5—50 acres are also affected. If the detailed statistics for this particular class of holdings in 1895 and 1905 respectively are compared, it will appear that they have decreased most markedly in those counties which are not purely agricultural, but which either contain or border on large towns or industrial districts. Thus the greatest fall in the number of such holdings (5—50 acres) is in the West Riding of Yorkshire, while the less industrially developed East Riding loses a much smaller number. Lancashire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire, all manufacturing counties, also show considerable decreases, as do Middlesex and Surrey, counties which may almost be considered simply as extensions of the ever-growing metropolis. On the other hand counties which are still mainly agricultural in character, and which lie outside the great centres of industrial and city life and the chief lines of communication, show an increase and not a decrease of these holdings. This is the case in Essex, Kent, Sussex, Hants, Devon, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. In Wales, too, which is still, as compared with England, an agricultural country, these holdings of 5—50 acres have in the period in question increased from 30,969 to 31,626¹.

But obviously the disappearance of small holdings in consequence of the extension of towns and industrial life has nothing to do with the question considered as one of agricultural economy. From this point of view the only matter of importance is whether the decrease of small holdings is in any degree due to their being thrown together to form large farms, or to some similar cause. What is shown by the statistics is simply the fact of decrease, without any indication as to whether this is caused by consolidation of holdings or by the spread of the towns. The decrease due to non-agricultural causes would have to be compensated before an increase over the whole country could appear in the statistics. So that from the point of view of agricultural economy it is perfectly possible for holdings of

¹ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes, pp. 189 f.*

5—50 acres to be actually on the increase without any indication of the fact being found in the statistics.

It is impossible here to avoid some criticism of the official agricultural statistics. All this obscurity might have been avoided by a better classification of holdings. The earlier statistics, which did adopt this more detailed classification, show that between 1885 and 1895 holdings of 20—50 acres increased from 61,146 to 62,446, while in the same period holdings of 5—20 acres decreased from 109,285 to 108,145. That is to say that the decrease was precisely among those smaller holdings which are common in the neighbourhood of the towns, and consequently are liable to be caught in their grip. Very likely the same phenomenon might have appeared if some similar distinction had been made in the period 1895—1905.

So too the lumping together in the statistics of all holdings from 50 to 300 acres as medium-sized holdings gives quite a false impression. Holdings of 50 to 100 acres really belong to the class of small holdings. So far as the observation of the present writer goes, the labour of the occupier and his family still plays the chief part, as a rule, on holdings up to about 100 acres, though of course the branch of production adopted makes some difference in the matter. The latest expert evidence also shows that such holdings are as a rule to be regarded as small holdings, and that in some counties, as e.g. in Wiltshire, a holding of 80 to 100 acres is considered as a typical small holding¹. In 1885 the total number of holdings of 50—300 acres in England was 104,073, of which only 44,843 were holdings of 50 to 100 acres. But the latter had increased by 1895 to 46,574. It is certain that the number must have risen again between 1895 and 1905, in view of the great increase in the number of holdings between 50 and 300 acres. But the extent of that rise it is impossible to determine, owing to the forcing of small and medium holdings into one class.

On the whole, therefore, the statistics only give glimpses into this matter of the development of the unit of holding. As regards the smallest holdings the question is obscured because some of them are absorbed for non-agricultural purposes, while many holdings properly to be classed as small are not distinguished from those of medium size. But at any rate the decrease in the class of large holdings, and the considerable increase in that which includes small as well as medium holdings, shows clearly what is the direction of development;

¹ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes, qu. 3715.*

so that the statistics confirm at least in some points what has been noted above as to the characteristics of the modern movement.

In a relatively short time the large farm system has thus retrograded considerably, and medium and small farms have made corresponding progress. The progress would have been more rapid but for certain causes, some of them economic and some not, to be considered below. But such as it was it appeared to many people as an altogether unprecedented phenomenon, especially to those who were not acquainted with the agricultural history of England, and supposed that the preponderance of large farms was inherited from time immemorial. To the historian the change is of course merely a reversion to the system of holdings which obtained up till the middle of the eighteenth century, and was destroyed only by the great development of arable farming.

CHAPTER VI

THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE REVIVAL OF SMALL FARMING

IN order to trace the causes which have led to a development in the matter of agricultural holdings diametrically opposed to that which had become traditional, it is necessary to consider the profits made on the various types of holding. For so far as landlords were influenced by economic motives, it was by the question as to which unit of holding would afford them, not of course simply the highest nominal rent, but the highest net income. From the middle of the eighteenth century till about 1880 they had favoured the large farm, because it paid the highest rent per acre and at the same time demanded least expenditure on repairs and administration. But with the agricultural crisis of 1880 onwards the conditions were radically altered.

The Commissions of 1880 and 1894 paid much attention to the question whether large or small farms had suffered most under the crisis. The minutes of evidence show that opinions were fairly evenly divided on the point. Many witnesses, especially those who may be ranked as champions of the small holding, alleged the higher rents per acre paid by the small farms¹ to prove that they were most profitable to the landlord. Of course this did not follow. Before such a conclusion could be drawn information must be given as to the relative fertility of soil, the cost of buildings and repairs, the cost of administration and various other points. Fortunately, however, other more trustworthy indications were offered of the causes which were moving landlords to favour the small farm system.

The Reports, the Minutes of Evidence, the publications and press discussions on the question agree in showing that after 1880 there was increasing difficulty throughout the country in letting large farms at all. At one time no holding could be too large. Now in many

¹ For some examples see Lawry, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1892, pp. 392 ff.

districts farms of 500 to 1000 acres could find no tenants¹. On the other hand it was a common experience² to find the demand for small and medium farms very vigorous³. Before the Commission of 1894 land agents complained of the extreme difficulty of finding tenants for the large farms⁴, but stated that "just as the area decreases, so is the disposition to take farms increased⁵." Large farmers threw their holdings on the landlords' hands and took small farms instead⁶. Landlords who had consolidated their farms between 1850 and 1880 found this most disconcerting, while those who had resisted the tendency rejoiced. "I am quite certain," wrote one, "if I had taken the advice of my friends thirty years ago, and concentrated my farms, I should have them all now on my hands⁷." "The demand for renting small holdings is something quite astonishing⁸," said Mr C. A. Fyffe in 1889. In one case in Yorkshire there were no fewer than 59 applicants for a farm of 26 acres⁹, and this was not exceptional.

If it was thus hard to let large farms and easy to let small and medium farms, there is no difficulty in accounting for the tendency to favour the latter on the part of the landlord. As the statistics show, this tendency developed slowly and in face of numerous hindrances. Many landlords left their farms long unlet, and put in bailiffs to manage them. But this system was only for temporary relief and was not as a rule maintained long. In a few years the landlord, finding that no tenants came, while other landlords had numbers of applicants for their smaller farms, began to consider and then to carry out a policy of division.

What this change in the relative demand for large and small farms proves is that the profitableness of the first had decreased while that of the second was increasing. It was frequently said that the reason the large farms remained unlet was that in these days of

¹ *Report of 1894*, qu. 31, 183 :—"If a farm of anything over 500 acres is given up now, I may say that it is an impossibility to let it; nobody will take more than 500 acres."

² S. B. L. Druce, in *Journal of the Farmers' Club*, November 1903, p. 7.

³ *Report of 1894*, qu. 477 :—"For the most part, the farms that we have in hand are large farms. The smaller farms are easily let as compared with the large farms." So also qu. 763 and 871.

⁴ *Ibid.*, qu. 14,874; and similar evidence in qu. 4480, 4571 ff., 8061, 13,420-13,421.

⁵ *Ibid.*, qu. 7237-7238.

⁶ *Ibid.*, qu. 16,808 and 16,963.

⁷ Quoted by C. S. Read, *Large and Small Holdings*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1887, p. 23. The landlord in question was Sir Massey Lopes.

⁸ *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 6076.

⁹ Eyre and Kyle, *op. cit.* p. 27; and also p. 23.

distress farmers had no longer capital enough to work them. But obviously if it had paid to work them the capital would have been forthcoming. If no one wished to invest his capital in large farming it was because better profits could be made elsewhere. Agricultural capital was withdrawn from large farming and invested in small farming. The large farms were not unlet because there were no capitalist farmers: capitalist farmers failed to appear because the profits to be made on large farms were not sufficient to attract them. The interesting question is why small farms had become more profitable than large.

The large farm began to be regarded as the ideal unit when in the middle of the eighteenth century corn-production became the great object of the farmer. Since 1880 corn-production, instead of being the most profitable branch of agriculture, has become the least profitable. Stock-feeding, dairying and market-gardening have taken the lead. Accordingly landlords must aim at multiplying such holdings as are best suited for these purposes. What these are will best be shown by a study of the typical units of holding in relation to the branch of agriculture pursued on each. So far as corn-growing and pasture-farming are concerned this study is fairly simple, as statistical evidence is to hand.

The statistics confirm what Robertson at the end of the eighteenth century and Caird in the middle of the nineteenth stated as the result of their own observations, that in the pasture districts of the west holdings were smaller than in the corn-producing eastern counties. This division of pasture and corn-land into geographical areas persists up to the present day, being chiefly due to the climatic and geological conditions¹ which favour pasture in the west. The figures of 1895 divide the English counties into four geographical districts. Of every 100 acres of agricultural land the percentage of arable² was as follows :—

<i>District I</i>	<i>District II</i>	<i>District III</i>	<i>District IV</i>
(eastern and north-eastern counties)	(south-eastern and east-midland counties)	(west-midland and south-western counties)	(northern and north-western counties)
68·7	46·1	40·1	32·5

Thus arable predominated only in the east and north-east. It was nearly 50 per cent. in the south-east and east-midlands. But in both the western districts pasture predominated considerably. The

¹ J. Caird, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1869, pp. 69 f.

² The corresponding percentages for the area under wheat were 10·3; 5·7; 3·9; 1·8.

main principle of the geographical distribution of arable and pasture was thus maintained, even though the proportionate distribution within the various districts had passed through various changes since the end of the eighteenth century. Further, the geographical distribution of arable and pasture still corresponded to the geographical distribution of large and small holdings observed by Robertson and Caird. This is shown by the following table, giving the acreage under each class of holding per 100 acres of agricultural land¹:—

<i>Class of Holding</i>	<i>District I Acres</i>	<i>District II Acres</i>	<i>District III Acres</i>	<i>District IV Acres</i>	<i>Whole of England Acres</i>
1—5 acres	·97	·95	1·12	1·21	1·07
5—20 „	3·84	4·15	4·63	6·74	4·87
20—50 „	6·30	6·94	7·81	12·13	8·36
50—100 „	10·32	11·50	13·72	18·89	13·70
100—300 „	37·12	41·35	45·46	43·86	42·00
300—500 „	21·60	19·18	15·67	11·45	16·86
500—1000 „	16·12	12·37	8·74	4·56	10·35
over 1000 „	3·73	3·56	2·85	1·16	2·79
	100	100	100	100	100

Reading from left to right, this table shows how the percentage of each class of holding increases or decreases as the district changes. The percentage of acres devoted to small holdings is seen to increase as we pass from east to west. This result is most marked in the case of holdings covering 20—50 and 50—100 acres, i.e. the small holdings proper. But the area under medium-sized farms also increases considerably. Large farms, on the contrary, show a decrease. In District I, for instance (eastern and north-eastern counties) 21·60 per cent. of the total agricultural area is occupied in holdings of 300—500 acres, against only 11·45 per cent. in District IV (west and north-west): and in the next class the percentages become 16·12 as against 4·56. Hand in hand with the increased percentage of arable in the east goes therefore an increase of large holdings. Hand in hand with the increased percentage of pasture in the west goes an increase of small and medium holdings.

Another table may serve to show the percentage of arable farms among the farms of each class in the various districts. Per 100 acres of agricultural land the percentage of arable (as opposed to permanent pasture) was as follows :—

¹ For the materials on which this table is based see Appendix II below.

<i>Class of Holding</i>	<i>District I Acres</i>	<i>District II Acres</i>	<i>District III Acres</i>	<i>District IV Acres</i>	<i>Whole of England Acres</i>
1—5 acres	47·5	25·07	25·22	13·70	26·87
5—50 "	56·44	26·89	26·82	17·56	29·00
50—100 "	66·15	41·52	38·13	33·95	42·48
100—300 "	70·23	47·69	40·42	37·55	47·92
300—500 "	70·94	51·11	43·86	35·96	53·09
over 500 "	70·77	51·32	50·53	30·21	55·98

The horizontal lines in this table show how in each class of holding the percentage of arable land decreases as we pass from east to west. It is therefore one more illustration of the fact that the agriculture of the east of England is much more dependent on the plough than that of the west. Reading down the lines vertically, the table shows that in all four districts the percentage of arable is least on the smallest holdings. On holdings of five acres and less, pasture predominates all over England, even in the arable districts. On holdings of 5—50, 50—100 and 100—300 acres, arable land predominates over pasture only in District I. In each district the proportion of arable land rises almost regularly with the size of holding. The larger the holding, the more arable land; the smaller the holding, the more pasture. The figures for the whole country show the same thing. Only holdings of over 1000 acres deviate from the rule. On them, in two districts, the proportion of arable land is less than in the class next below them; but this, as will be seen below, is easily explained. In the eastern and north-eastern counties arable already predominates in the second class of holdings (5—50 acres); in the south-east and east-midlands not till class 5 (300—500 acres) is reached; in the west-midlands and south-west not till the area is over 500 acres. In the west and north-west there is no class of holding on which arable land predominates over pasture. In England, taken as a whole, it predominates only in those classes into which the large farms fall. Thus arable land is most in evidence where large farms predominate, while stock-farming, so far as it is based on pasture, is commonest where small and medium-sized farms most abound. Further, whether the district in question is predominantly plough-land or pasture, the small farms are always mainly devoted to pasture, and everywhere stock-farming based on pasture is more developed on small and medium than on large holdings.

These figures are striking evidence of the fact that stock-farming is a branch of agriculture which mainly belongs to the small and medium holdings. But it must be remembered that stock-farming is not only carried out on pasture lands. Where stall-feeding is

extensively used, a stock-farm may yet have more arable land than pasture, the arable being chiefly devoted to crops used as fodder. There are, however, figures which prove yet further that not only pasture-farming, but stock-feeding generally, at least so far as cattle and pigs are concerned, belongs to the domain of the small farmer. The number of animals kept per 100 acres on the various types of farm is given in the following table¹:—

<i>Class of Holding</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Pigs</i>	<i>Sheep</i>
1—5 acres	29·9	49·8	29·9
5—20 „	31·4	22·1	31·6
20—50 „	27·1	12·5	44·3
50—100 „	23·1	9·1	50·9
100—300 „	18·5	6·7	62·9
300—500 „	14·7	5·1	84·8
500—1000 „	11·2	4·2	103·2
over 1000 „	8·2	2·9	107·8

Here it appears that the relative number of cattle and pigs kept regularly decreases as the size of holding increases, but the sheep increase. The latter result seems to indicate the reason for the increase of pasture land on farms of over 1000 acres as compared with those of 500—1000 acres. It is not that ordinary stock-farming increases, but that these very large holdings often consist of great sheep-walks; that is to say, wide stretches of land covered with poor pasture.

It is not so easy to show the extent to which the other branches of agriculture, as fruit and vegetable growing and poultry-farming, are developed on the various classes of holding. No statistics are available. But almost all reports and publications on the subject mention these businesses as being primarily conducted on the small farms². It appears that where the soil is suited neither for pasture nor market-gardening, small farms are often conspicuous by their absence³. “A rapid development of special crops, such as celery, carrots, beetroot and other vegetables” is ascribed in the first place to small holders, as for example those in the Isle of Axholme, who have chiefly developed the cultivation of potatoes, celery and cabbage⁴. So with poultry-farming. The large farmers left it alone, as they did dairy-farming and stock-breeding⁵. On hundreds of

¹ *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1886, p. 104.

² *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 7389; and 3765, 3766, 3773. Cp. also H. Samuel, *Liberalism*, 1902, Chapter v, *The Land Question*.

³ *Final Report*, p. 357:—“In counties like Suffolk, where there is little good pasture land or land suited for market-gardening, small farms and freehold farmers are rare.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 355. Cp. also Bear, *A Study etc.*, p. 18.

⁵ Lord Wantage, in *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 1945.

large farms fowls, eggs, vegetables, fruit, honey, etc. are only produced for home consumption, whereas it would be hard to find a small farmer who does not send considerable quantities of these products to market¹. Accordingly, districts specially suited for fruit or vegetables are usually covered with small holdings, as in the famous Vale of Evesham, one of the best fruit districts in England, and also one exclusively occupied by small holders²: and in a strawberry-growing district in the neighbourhood of Southampton, where the largest fruit gardens are not more than 35 acres, and the ordinary size is from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 acres³. "In the Chatteris neighbourhood of Cambridgeshire, numbers of small holders have been able to pay rents of over £2 an acre...and have made a good thing out of holdings of four to fifty acres, growing potatoes and early carrots, besides other produce," wrote Mr Channing in his summary of the evidence before the 1894 Commission⁴. All these branches of production belong to the small holder. Corn-growing, on the contrary, and particularly corn-growing for the market, is a point in which they are very weak.

The corn-production of the small holdings is almost entirely for home consumption, whether for bread for the family, or, what is much more common in modern times, for the purpose of providing fodder and straw. Allotment holders of 4—5 acres and upwards, even if they have any arable, sell no corn, but feed it all to their pigs and cattle, their horse if they keep one, and their fowls. But even on small holdings of a larger size corn-growing plays a very small part, as the statistics quoted have shown. Even in those rare cases where such a holding is mainly arable, as in the often-quoted Isle of Axholme (celebrated even in Arthur Young's time), this holds good⁵. A local expert⁶ informed the present writer that a holding of 60 acres would as a rule be divided as follows:—8 acres under permanent pasture, 10 under potatoes, 4 under turnips, 3 under mangold, 5 under clover, and the remaining 30 acres under wheat, oats and barley. The occupier's main source of income would be his potato crop, together with the three or four cows and ten or twelve pigs he would keep, and any other live-stock. His oats, barley, turnips, clover and mangolds would be fed to his beasts. The product of the 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres of wheat would be

¹ H. Rew, *Report on North Devon*, 1895 (C. 7728), p. 15:—"It is the regular practice for the wives and daughters of the small farmers...to take poultry, eggs, butter and clotted cream, as well as garden produce, honey etc., into the market once a week and there sell it direct to the customers." Cp. also Eyre, *op. cit.* pp. 10 f.

² W. E. Bear, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1899, pp. 36, 40.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴ *Final Report*, p. 358.

⁵ Levy, *Der Untergang etc.*, p. 160; Bear, *op. cit.* pp. 14-24.

⁶ Mr John Ross, of Belton, Lincolnshire.

sold. So that of 52 acres of arable only $8\frac{1}{2}$ would serve to grow corn for the market, and the other $43\frac{1}{2}$ would be for stock-feeding and potato growing.

The small farms of the eighteenth century, previous to the agrarian revolution, had produced little corn for the market, and the revived small farms of the nineteenth century follow in their steps. "Cows, pigs, poultry and vegetables are the four chief sources of profit that would come off a (small) farm, to enable a tenant to do well; and I should say that nearly all small farmers would carry out the same system," said a witness before the 1880 Commission¹. *A priori*, the natural result must have been that small farms, pursuing the now most profitable branches of agriculture, would prosper much more than the large farms, which were to a great extent dependent on the increasingly unprofitable production of corn. It remains to consider whether this *a priori* deduction is justified by the facts: whether, as a result of the different branches of production pursued on large and small farms respectively, the latter actually prospered better than the former in the period of the crisis.

Unfortunately the question has never been put precisely in this form. The Royal Commissions of 1880-1 and 1894-7 considered the position of large and small holdings in general, without special attention to the branch of production pursued, and arrived at the somewhat vague conclusion that the small farms had, not everywhere, but in particular districts under special conditions, proved better capable of standing against the crisis than the large. But examples were adduced to show that in some cases the small farmers had suffered even more acutely than the large, and it was therefore concluded that the small farm system was not universally superior to the large farm system. The Reports, therefore, cannot be used in this matter without first being subjected to a critical analysis. It is not sufficient simply to state that in such and such a district small farms did better, and in such another worse. The interesting question is why this was so, and it cannot as a rule be answered by mere statistics. The varying profitableness of the different branches of agriculture makes it antecedently probable that the class of holdings which suffered least would be that on which the more profitable branches were pursued. In other words, the small farms, which were mainly devoted to stock-feeding and market-gardening, would as a rule have the advantage over the mainly corn-growing large farms. The exceptions, that is to say the cases in which small farms suffered severely, prove the rule.

¹ *Report on Agricultural Depression*, 1881, qu. 62,310 (Mr Baghot de la Bere); also qu. 62,615.

For, generally speaking, those exceptions are small farms on which stock-feeding and market-gardening were not the main objects. They were those which were chiefly concerned with corn-growing.

To cite the Isle of Axholme once more. At the present time, as shown above, the small holdings of this district are not indeed pasture farms, but their arable land is not used chiefly to grow corn for the market, but to produce food for cattle on the one hand and vegetables for the market on the other. This, however, is a new state of affairs¹. Formerly the district was renowned for its corn-producing yeomanry. After 1880 this class fell into great distress, and were quoted as an example of the failure of small holdings to meet the crisis². Their history is perhaps almost unique in English agricultural history, but it is very instructive where the question of the unit of holding is under consideration. Up to 1880 the Isle of Axholme was possibly the one district in which the old yeomanry still predominated. In the period between 1760 and 1815 they had not decided to transform themselves into large farmers, but had retained the old communal spirit³, had as a body undertaken improvements⁴, and had successfully carried on corn-production throughout the period of high prices. But the custom of leaving the land to the eldest son led, during the good years (1850 to 1880), to the practice of burdening it with mortgages, inasmuch as the price of land had increased considerably. When the drop in prices came, and profits fell, "the rent now due in the shape of interest," sums up Mr Pringle in his report to the Commissioners of 1894, "far exceeds what would be a 'fair rent'." This was the ruin of the old corn-growing yeomanry, who perhaps felt the crisis more immediately than the farmers, since the latter could get their rents lowered. They disappeared; and their successors, together with a few wise survivors of their own class, diminished the corn crops in favour of other, now more profitable, agricultural pursuits, and especially developed stock-feeding and potato and celery growing. This policy proved a complete success⁵. Agricultural distress practically

¹ Channing, op. cit. p. 284. He says that the area under wheat fell off considerably, while that under oats (probably for use as fodder) increased by 40% while "there has been a rapid and persistent development of special crops, such as celery, carrots, beetroot, and other vegetables."

² O. Stillich, *Die englische Agrarkrisis*, Jena, 1899, p. 92.

³ Bear, *A Study etc.*, pp. 16, 24.

⁴ Drainage, in particular, was carried out at their common expense. On this point cp. also Rae, op. cit. p. 563.

⁵ *Report on the Isle of Axholme*, by R. Hunter Pringle, 1894, Vol. xvi, Pt. 1, p. 682.

⁶ Bear, *A Study etc.*, p. 24:—"Small farming in the Isle of Axholme must be regarded as a success."

disappeared from the Isle, and altogether from the small farms and allotments devoted to vegetable-growing¹. Small farming, therefore, in the Isle of Axholme proved entirely successful so far as it was concerned with live-stock and vegetable-growing, but failed as badly as large farming, or perhaps more so, in regard of corn-production.

The same was true of other districts. Where small farmers depended on their corn-crops they suffered severely from the crisis. Cases of this kind were naturally most common in the eastern counties. Thus the small farmers of Bedfordshire were reported to be doing very badly; and their holdings were chiefly arable². So, too, a gloomy picture was painted of the condition of Norfolk farmers holding from 50 to 100 acres³; and again the class concerned seems to have been mainly occupied in corn-growing. For Norfolk was preponderantly an arable county, even the smallest holdings, of 1 to 5 and 5 to 20 acres, being under the plough⁴. The case was the same in Suffolk, where pasture and vegetable-growing were very slow to develop⁵. In fact, wherever distress among the smaller landholders is reported it turns out that specifically arable districts are concerned: and in such districts the small holders undoubtedly suffered more than the large⁶.

Where stock-feeding and market-gardening or the like were the chief business, matters were quite otherwise. It is a recognised fact, and appears on the face of the Report of the Commission of 1894, that agricultural distress was much less in the pasture districts than in the arable districts. Now the statistics quoted above show that it was in the pasture districts of the west and north-west that most of the small and medium-sized holdings of the country were situated, while large farms were much less common there than in the eastern counties. Therefore it is clear at once that so far as stock-farming, and especially pasture-farming, is concerned, the depression was much less felt on small farms than on large. This general proposition may be supplemented by various individual examples. Thus small farmers in Devonshire, who only grew so much corn as would enable them to buy their seed again out of the profits, are reported to have suffered

¹ Rider Haggard, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 196:—"In the district (Epworth) there was nothing that approached to distress."

² *Report of 1894*, qu. 35,652.

³ *Report of 1881*, qu. 51,874 ff.; 52,132 ff.; and 51,935 f.

⁴ See the tables in Appendix II below.

⁵ Channing, *op. cit.* pp. 7, 289.

⁶ Bear, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1891, pp. 269 ff. Such districts were North Yorkshire, Durham, Lincolnshire, East Suffolk and Norfolk.

very little from the crisis¹. In Huntingdonshire "the small grass-farmers, who depend on milk and not on corn-growing," were reported to have been "able to hold their own considerably better than those who have had anything to do with trying to grow corn²." Where the small holders sold milk and vegetables and "owing to the nature of their husbandry are not corn-growing," no signs of depression were to be found³. A witness informed the Committee of 1906 that "In certain districts of Cheshire and Flintshire there are small holdings which are all permanent pasture, where the production is cheese-making; these are almost invariably doing well⁴."

The demand for small holdings, too, proved greater where they included little plough-land⁵. As an expert put it:—"I observe that a small farmer who keeps clear of the plough generally does well; but whenever arable land is touched, his life appears to me to be one of toil and penury⁶." For instance, on the great Stratton estate the most successful and most coveted small farms were those which were on grass lands⁷. That well-known agricultural writer Mr T. E. Kebbel said in the 1893 edition of his book on *The Agricultural Labourer* that "no argument is wanted at this time of day to show that a man can thrive on a small grass farm, who would starve on a small corn farm⁸." The same was true in an enhanced degree of allotment-holdings. Their success, too, depended on their being devoted to live-stock and pasture. When Lord Wenlock offered to form arable allotments on his Yorkshire property, not a single application was made for them, and it appeared that such holdings were intensely unpopular⁹. In other districts there was so great a demand for grass allotments that there were numerous competitors for every one available, and their rents hardly fell at all even in the worst times¹⁰.

It remains to compare the position of the small holdings with that of the larger farms. Where the former grew little wheat as compared with the latter, they proved to be much more

¹ Read, *op. cit.* p. 22.

² *Report of 1894*, qu. 41,206; and Bear, *A Study etc.*, p. 36.

³ *Report of 1881*, qu. 62,307; and so qu. 47,904.

⁴ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes*, qu. 6739; cp. also Mr Bear's instructive article *Prospects for Small Holdings*, in *The Bath and West and Southern Counties Journal*, 1908, p. 39.

⁵ *Report of 1894*, qu. 3546 (Mr Ingram):—"There is not nearly the same difficulty in letting a farm, anything up to about 100 acres (as in letting the larger ones), assuming there is not too much arable land in it."

⁶ See Read, *op. cit.* p. 23.

⁷ Stirton, *op. cit.* p. 93.

⁸ T. E. Kebbel, *The Agricultural Labourer*, ed. 1893, p. 160.

⁹ Earl of Onslow, *op. cit.* p. 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

successful¹. Cheshire, which had long been celebrated for its small and medium-sized dairy-farms, was said to have suffered less from the depression than any other county in England². Wherever stock-feeding and dairy-farming flourished small holdings prospered, while large farms did not do nearly so well³. Monmouthshire⁴, Leicestershire⁵, and other counties might be cited⁶. The same was true where the small holders devoted themselves to fruit, vegetables, or poultry-breeding. To fruit-farming, for instance, was attributed the superior prosperity of the small holders and cottagers as compared with the large farmers in Herefordshire. The latter gave no such intensive care to the fruit as the former⁷. In East Sussex, where rents had as a rule been very remarkably reduced, the small poultry-farms were in many cases found to be paying as much as ever⁸. In many parts of the country the small holders, selling no corn, had even profited considerably by the fall in its price, since they got cheaper food for their cattle, pigs and fowls⁹.

Speaking generally, therefore, the success of the small and medium holdings in withstanding the crisis depended on the branch of agriculture which they pursued. Even in the great days of corn-growing the small farm had proved its economic inferiority to the large farm so far as this commodity was concerned. When corn-growing fell on evil times, the small arable farmers suffered even more severely than the large. But comparatively few small holdings had been given up to corn: and the branches of production to which they were mostly devoted and in which they excelled were precisely those which after 1880 became most profitable. Therefore in general the small holdings had a better chance than the large during the period of depression. Accordingly the evidence as to distress among small holders, if rightly interpreted, is seen to concern exceptions to the general rule; only an

¹ Cp. A. J. Burrows, *The Agricultural Depression*, 1882, pp. 11 f. :—"At this moment very few small farms remain upon the hands of the landowners, and many of these have lately been let at an increased rental; while many large arable farms are unlettable even at considerably reduced rents."

² *Report of 1894*, qu. 10,407.

³ *Ibid.*, qu. 4218-4220, evidence of Sir Gardner Engleheart :—"Looking generally at the property under your management, would you say that the depression is more felt by the large farms or the small ones?—I think mostly by the large ones.—Is that specially in the case of the grass districts?—Yes.—You think small farms have answered better?—Yes, I think so."

⁴ *Ibid.*, qu. 35,126.

⁵ *Ibid.*, qu. 13,313.

⁶ *Ibid.*, qu. 13,668.

⁷ *Ibid.*, qu. 5541 (Rankin).

⁸ *Ibid.*, qu. 3533 ff. and 3828 ff.

⁹ *Ibid.*, qu. 37,454 (Olver) :—"In the west of Cornwall they (the small farmers) are practically dependent on the dairy, the making of pork and so on; they buy a great deal of their grain, and are gainers by the low price of corn."

uncritical reading of the facts could lead to any other conclusion. The great majority of the allotment holders and small and medium farmers, not being primarily interested in corn-production, suffered much less than the large and very large farmers.

When this is understood it becomes possible to state the economic causes of the tendency to cease enlarging farms and to revive the system of small holdings. Landowners were forced to recognise that from about 1880, with the change in market conditions, the question of the unit of holding had entered on a new phase. Small farms, if devoted to the now profitable branches of agriculture (as they were in most cases), offered higher returns than large farms. The demand for them was stronger than that for large farms. Less was heard of distress among the small farmers than among their larger competitors. Their rents as a rule dropped less. All this is surely an adequate explanation of the tendency in question. It is true that it was only a tendency, and certain counteracting forces remain to be considered. But at least it is clear that under these conditions landlords, so far as they were moved by economic considerations, considered themselves fortunate if their property mainly consisted of small farms, and attempted no further consolidation or "engrossing." The economic motive for division was provided by the fact that under modern conditions the small holdings system had become economically desirable.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM

(a) Small Holdings as a Remedy for the Rural Exodus.

THE social and political aspects of the problem of the unit of agricultural holding have never been more prominent than in recent times. Alongside of the economic tendency making for the division of large farms into small, two non-economic forces of almost equal strength have been at work, one furthering and the other counteracting that tendency. The first has already been glanced at; it remains to show its origin and its result.

Social politicians of the eighteenth century, in opposition to the agricultural interest, attacked the large farm system on the ground that it depopulated the land; and in recent times Liberal reformers have enthusiastically taken up the small holdings movement, as seeing in it the one means of preventing the increasing rural exodus¹. Agricultural history justifies this view. It shows that a rural exodus began precisely at the time when the evolution of the large farm system began. The degradation of small farmers into day-labourers, the expropriation of agricultural workers from the soil, the enclosure of the commons, and the disappearance of the yeomanry, all resulted from the economic pressure which developed large holdings, and all at least contributed to drive the labourer from the land. The proletarianised farmer or cottager had no longer any tie to bind him to the soil, and under the bad conditions of rural life he turned his eyes to the towns as his only hope. The yeoman, when converted into a large farmer, no longer needed the help of all the members of his family; he only directed the work of his farm, which was carried out by wage-labourers. His sons, therefore, must either themselves become farmers, or else go to the towns to become merchants or factory owners. The development of the large farm system thus went

¹ Samuel, *op. cit.* pp. 100 f.

hand in hand with that sharper definition of class distinctions at which the social reformers of the eighteenth century were so much concerned. Further, the rural exodus resulted largely from the swamping of the agricultural labour-market, and this from the large farm system, which did not develop a sufficient demand for labour to employ all the newly-created proletariat. This over-supply of labour reached its culminating point under the corn-laws, which diminished the industrial demand for labour and as it were slammed the gates of the towns in the labourer's face. He was now obliged to stay on the land whether he liked it or not. Young's theory was proved false; the large farm system could not even approximately employ, under anything like decent conditions, the crowds of labourers it created. Free trade at last brought salvation, by giving a new impetus to industry and so opening up again the way from the land to the town. Labourers streamed in crowds into industrial employments, and the agricultural labour-market was at last disburdened. Wages and the whole standard of life went up for those labourers who remained on the land¹. The effect of the large farm system had thus been to create an over-supply of labour, larger and increasing more rapidly than the agricultural demand could suffice to take up. Only two results were possible. The population might, for whatever reasons, remain on the land, and if so, wages must fall. This actually happened in the corn-law period. Or on the other hand migration might increase, as was the case after 1846. Accordingly the rural exodus has been to a very great extent a consequence of the large farm system. Trade and industry developed a growing demand for labour, and the rural population, bound by no ties to the soil, went where the best chances were offered it. The large farm system did not of course create the rural exodus, but it essentially strengthened the tendency.

The number of agricultural labourers (shepherds included) fell from 1,253,786 in 1851 to 621,168 in 1901, or by more than 50 per cent. This decrease has been explained by the development of pasture-farming and the use of agricultural machinery, which, it is said, between them rendered many labourers superfluous and so caused the depopulation of the land. They had of course their share in the movement, especially in certain districts. But they cannot be said to have caused it, for both arable and dairy-farming districts were left crying out for labour. The demand had not indeed

¹ See the detailed description in Wilson Fox, *Agricultural Wages*, in *Journal R. Statistical Soc.*, 1903. Also H. Levy, *Landarbeiterfrage und Landflucht in England*, in *Brauns Archiv*, 1903, pp. 497 ff.

increased absolutely: but nevertheless the supply was diminished to such an extent that labourers often simply could not be found, more especially, as Mr Rider Haggard has shown¹, when younger men were wanted. If it was the extension of pasture or the introduction of machinery which was driving the people off the land, they might have gone to the districts where agricultural labour was in such great demand, instead of to London, Birmingham or Manchester. To explain why they did not do so would need a description at large of the differences between the life of the labourer on the land and in the towns². The labourer left the land because the towns offered him higher wages, more enjoyment, more physical and mental excitement, greater freedom and a higher social position. He was not concerned with the fact that the farmer had to pay higher wages and generally to provide better conditions of life than had formerly been the case. His comparison was not between past and present, but between two present-day standards; and he preferred that of the town.

The large farm system had thus failed to fulfil the social hopes which it had held out. It was to have provided the labourers with steady work at high wages, and so to keep them on the land. As a fact, its tendency was to develop a greater supply of labour than it could use. And although in recent times the opportunities for migration have prevented the labourers from feeling the injurious results of that tendency, and wages and conditions have on the contrary steadily improved, they continue to leave the land. This is still partly to be attributed to the large farm system. For it deprived the labourers of their holdings, and so robbed agricultural employment of its chief attraction. The use of a piece of land makes the delights of town life look dull, and keeps the labourer in the country even when in many respects he might do better in other employments. The large farm system, therefore, aggravated the opposition between town and country conditions, and in every direction strengthened the tendency to migration.

This fact has been recognised of late years, and in consequence the creation of small holdings has been regarded as of increasing importance as a means of putting a stop to the rural exodus. It is no longer simply a question of the need of the landed interests for allotments as a means of retaining their labourers. The movement is

¹ Haggard, *op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 105 f. (Sussex); Vol. II, p. 222 (Lincolnshire); p. 112 (Oxfordshire); and *cp.* also p. 539.

² For such a description see Levy, *Landarbeiterfrage etc.*, pp. 503-6; and also Shaw Lefevre, *op. cit.* pp. 31-33.

not simply "in the interest of the employers," in the sense in which that is a doubtful benefit to the men. The question is understood to be a question of social policy. Small holdings and allotments are to bring the people back to the land. The aim of the Labourers' Friend Society in 1832 had been simply to improve the lot of the labourers, whose wages had fallen in view of the over-stocked market for their labour and the impossibility of migration. But the modern movement aims at moderating the rural exodus, and at re-populating the deserted country.

It is very credible that labourers who are in a position to cultivate a bit of land for themselves are more inclined to remain on the land than the mere proletarian. There is something very attractive to the labourer in the prospect of advancing from the status of an allotment-holder to that of a small farmer, and of finally being free from the necessity of working for an employer. He wants something better to look forward to than his weekly wage on a Saturday night, as Mr Winfrey put it¹. In the most various cases the provision of allotments and small holdings has proved to be favourable to the increase of the population of a district, just as when they disappeared the rural population was found to migrate if possible². "It is an established fact," says Mr Samuel, "that in the villages of England where small holdings are numerous the population rarely declines and often increases³." Statistics too may be cited in this connection. In the Census of Occupations, under the head "Farmers' Relatives assisting in the work of the Farm," the numbers fell from 111,704 in the year 1851 to 75,197 in the year 1881, but rose again to 89,165 between 1881 and 1901. These noteworthy figures are probably chiefly to be explained by the development of small holdings. Small farming needs, both absolutely and per acre, more labour than does large farming; and therefore, with the decrease in small farms between 1851 and 1881, went a decrease in the number of farmers' relatives employed. Conversely such employment increased from the moment when large farming began to give way to small⁴. Therefore, also, as labourers were converted into allotment-holders and small farmers, the possibility of keeping not only themselves but their sons and daughters on the land increased. It was this fact which first turned

¹ *Report of Proceedings at the Fifth Congress of the Co-operative Alliance, 1902*, p. 343.

² *Ibid.*, p. 369. See also W. J. Harris's paper in *Land, its Attractions and Riches, 1892*, p. 302.

³ Samuel, *op. cit.* p. 104.

⁴ See also Druce, *op. cit.* pp. 3, 13.

the attention of the Liberal party to the social importance of small holdings. The old attempt to provide the labourer with land to cultivate or to keep stock on was revived, after nearly a century of impotence, under the motto of "three acres and a cow¹." Legislative, as well as private effort, gave it expression. Before discussing the legislative efforts in this direction, however, there are certain important facts to be taken into consideration.

(b) *The problem of landownership in relation to the unit of holding.*

The multiplication of small holdings may take place in two ways ; namely either by a revival of small properties, i.e. by the purchase of land by small cultivators, or by the division of large farms into small ones, and the consequent replacing of the existing large farmers by a greater number of small farmers. In either case the question of landownership offers difficulties.

If the object in view is the multiplication of small properties, it has first of all to be taken into consideration that relatively speaking very little land comes upon the market in England. The greater part of the land is entailed, and the owner is obliged to hand it on intact at his death to his eldest son or other legal heir. He cannot sell any of it, unless under the very unattractive conditions prescribed by the Settled Land Act of 1882. In any case, many such owners have no idea of selling, but only desire to buy land ; so that the ownership of the soil continually comes into fewer and fewer hands. It may be said that 50 per cent. of the land of England is owned by between two and three thousand persons. A further result of the system is that the actual process of sale becomes expensive, since the possibility of the existence of an entail makes it necessary for the seller to prove in each instance his right to alienate the land in question, which adds to the lawyer's charges. And if the quantity of land upon the market is limited in this way, the would-be small owner finds the price of it enhanced in another way. In no country is the possession of land so much desired for social and political reasons as in England. Landownership gives the rich man social standing, and very often the possibility of a political career ; and every great iron-master, ship-builder or manufacturer must needs have his country house just as the old county families have. Then there is the question of sport. In the case of most sales the advertisements in the newspapers will

¹ F. Impey, *Three Acres and a Cow*, 1885.

be found to contain some such important item as "shooting good"; or "good shooting, hunting and fishing"; or "choice sporting estate." Obviously, the demand for land for such purposes as these, more especially in view of the limited supply, must raise its exchange value above the capitalised annual profit. Although the actual price of land may have fallen in the last two or three decades, the wealthy purchaser finds compensation for the small return obtainable for his capital in the non-economic advantages of landownership. The rents may be small, but he has the satisfaction of being a landlord; and so long as this is his object, he is ready to pay more for the land than its strictly economic value would warrant. "There are landlords holding even large estates to whom it is not a matter of serious issue whether they get any profit from their estates¹": and there are others who find farming "the pleasantest of recreations, giving health and pleasure far beyond yachting and horses," even if the "farm accounts year by year show a substantial balance on the wrong side²."

This difference between the capitalised annual profit and the exchange value is however a serious matter for the man who wants to buy a small property and to live on its produce. He has to pay, in the enhanced purchasing price, for a quality of the land which is of no value to him, since what he is concerned with is simply the economic possibilities of the holding. All this is especially true of the neighbourhood of large towns; and as the excellent means of communication in England bring the townsman rapidly and cheaply into the country, the word "neighbourhood" is here of wide significance. If the purchaser of a small dairy-farm of, say, 20 acres, has to pay, besides the price reckoned in the ordinary way upon the profits, a "super-price" determined by the amount which a city capitalist is willing to pay for the property as a shooting-box or country residence, it naturally becomes doubtful whether the small owner, even if he does well, will be able to get from the land an adequate return upon his capital. This is the great difficulty in the way of a revival of small properties.

But the development of small tenant-farming, by the cutting up of large farms into small, is also faced with difficulties arising out of the problem of landownership in England. These difficulties become burning questions where small agriculturists have not the capital for the purchase of land, but have the means and capacity to rent a small holding. The difficulty in this case arises from the fact that it

¹ W. J. Malden, *The Conversion of Arable Land into Pasture*, 1898, p. 25.

² Haggard, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, p. 160.

depends on the will of the landlord to form small farms or not to form them. Their economic interest, in the present day, often demands that they should form them. The reason why they frequently nevertheless fail to do so is partly to be sought in the high initial expenditure required for the erection of farmhouses and outbuildings, the provision of a water-supply, and so forth. They are afraid of such an experiment. Often they hesitate to borrow the necessary capital; or if they have it themselves, some other investment seems safer or more profitable. But still, so far as the hindrances to the division of large farms lie in purely economic considerations such as these, they might be regarded as not insuperable. If many landlords had the experience of Lord Harrowby, who had five and twenty offers for a holding of 23 acres, while for one of 1000 acres he could not find a single purchaser, enlightened self-interest might be trusted to bring them to the conclusion that they must surely if slowly cut up their estates into small holdings unless they wish to see them vastly diminished in value¹. Probably such economic considerations would already have led to a much more rapid development of small holdings if other non-economic motives had not counteracted their effect. But here again it has to be remembered that to the English landowner the soil is not simply an instrument of production, out of which he seeks to obtain the highest returns possible; its value to him is very largely in the social, political and sporting amenities which it offers. Small holdings, however, are much less favourable than large to sport and hunting. Lord Harrowby did indeed attempt to explain the antipathy of landlords to the development of small holdings purely on the ground of the expenditure involved, and laid before the Committee of 1906 calculations intended to prove this. But an incidental remark in his evidence speaks more eloquently than those hypothetical figures. "I think if you have a house with shooting it is a disadvantage to have a lot of little holdings all about the place—there is trespass and all that." He himself at that time reared, he said, 5000 pheasants on his estates². In many neighbourhoods the landlord is an opponent of small holdings for the reason that they demand the transformation of arable into pasture, which is bad for partridge shooting. In Norfolk large districts were for some time let at an almost nominal rent, although some of the land was well suited for fruit and vegetable culture, and therefore for the formation of small holdings³. Nor is

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, qu. 2387 and qu. 2439.

² *Ibid.*, qu. 2450. Cp: also qu. 2458, 2460.

³ J. Simpson, in *The County Gentleman's Estate Book*, 1903, p. 214.

this the only non-economic motive which affects the landlord adversely to small holdings. The cutting up of large fields and pastures, or the multiplication of buildings, or even of houses with smoking chimneys, may offend his taste and his sense of pride in his estate. Again, many Conservatively-minded landlords are doubtful whether the new race of small farmers, mostly raised from the ranks of the mere labourers, will represent the political views of their squire as well as the old true-blue large farmers; or whether the creation of these new holdings may not create a crowd of radical land-reformers on their own preserves. This alone is sufficient to make many landlords prefer lowering the rent of their existing tenants to cutting up the farms with a view to obtaining a larger income. But their leanings in this direction are strongly confirmed by the influence of their land-agents. These latter have to administer the estates, to collect the rents and to treat with the tenants. The landlord, who spends his time hunting and shooting, the season in London, the winter in Paris or on the Riviera, has comparatively little time on his own land, and knows little of its economic aspects. He consults his agent on such points; and the agent is in favour of large holdings. The large farmer is of the same social standing as himself, often his personal friend, and all difficult questions can be settled between them over a sociable glass of whisky. The trouble begins when the small farmer has to be dealt with¹. In this case the tenant regards the agent as a capitalist rent-collector; the agent regards the tenant as little better than a proletarian. Consequently their relations tend to be strained. Besides this, one holding of 300 acres gives the agent considerably less trouble, less controversy over repairs and such matters, than the same area when cut up into say fifteen holdings of 20 acres each. The large farmer does small repairs for himself; to the little farmer every job seems big enough for a call upon the landlord. Hence the dislike of the agents for small holdings: and they have as a rule the ear of their employer. It must not however be forgotten that there are honourable exceptions to this rule. There are wide-minded or energetic landlords (as for example the present President of the Board of Agriculture, Lord Carrington) and agents under such landlords who are really interested in carrying out their views². But on the

¹ The statement in the (distinctly Conservative) *Report of 1906* that "of the agents who appeared before the Committee none expressed themselves as hostile to the creation of small holdings" is a somewhat naïve defence in face of the facts, which are unfortunately only too well-known. The land-agents naturally do not ascribe their prejudice to mere selfishness, but to purely technical and economic considerations.

² *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes*, qu. 8059 (Mr J. Tomkinson): and the evidence of Mr H. M. Jonas, agent for Lord Carrington, pp. 258 ff.

whole the bitter words of that old Parliamentarian, Sir Francis Channing, are true: "It is an age of extreme luxury, when estates are bought by the enormously rich for social prestige, and without thought of the duty that attaches to the owner of land as the nation's trustee. With many, the passion for sport overrides everything, and will throw every obstacle in the way of sub-division, which endangers the interests of shooting or of hunting¹."

Yet a third class of opponents of small holdings is formed by the large farmers themselves, who are also strongly opposed to the letting of allotments to labourers. Their objections seem to be only partly due to the considerations of political or social advantage or general amenity which are at the root of the opposition of landlords and land-agents. They claim that their dislike is in the main based on economic considerations: and their arguments are those which their predecessors employed before them. They say that allotments will make the labourer too independent, and will lead him to expend more and better labour on his own holding than on theirs. Their ideal is still a proletarian labouring class, as appears in every discussion on small holdings and the rural exodus². Yet it would seem a matter for serious consideration on their part whether, in view of the exodus from the land and the much-lamented shortage of labour, it would not suit them better to have labourers holding land than no labourers at all. Would not a constant supply of labour and the retention of the young men on the land be better than insufficient numbers of ageing men? Kentish farmers are said to engage all manner of people from the towns nearest to them for their harvest work—clerks, petty officials, etc., who spend their holidays in this manner and so combine pleasure with profit. It hardly seems reasonable that farmers in such a position should grudge the labourer his allotment, instead of rejoicing at a means which would put labour at his disposal when he needed it. The smallest holdings keep the younger labourers on the soil and so would supply him with regular daily labour. The larger allotments should provide the necessary occasional labour, especially where they consist of grass land, and the wife is able to look after the cow-sheds and milk the cows when her husband is out at work. It is frequently reported that such allotment-holders make the best labourers³. In short, the economic objections of the large farmer seem to be rather a traditional prejudice than a genuine argument, even if they are made in good faith, which is often doubtful.

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, p. 52.

² Cp. e.g. *Proceedings of the Central Chamber of Agriculture*, 1901, p. 216.

³ Earl of Onslow, *op. cit.* p. 47.

Their dislike is really traceable to social considerations, which for purposes of discussion are decently cloaked in economic garments. As a matter of fact the large farmer has an antipathy to the small man who claims or hopes to claim a position of independence. It is largely due to this social prejudice that, as Mr Channing's Minority Report put it: "The majority of the large farmers do not yet seem to realise what the systematic development of allotments and small holdings can do for agriculture in maintaining on the spot a permanent supply of efficient and skilled labour¹." The prejudices of the large farmers and land-agents also mutually strengthen each other.

Mr G. C. Brodrick drew from such considerations as these the conclusion that small holdings cannot make much progress unless the great landed estates are broken up. Where the estate is comparatively small and the owner is his own agent the evils resulting from the free hand given to the agent on the large estates are not, he says, present; and on such estates the tendency to divide the holdings is stronger². No doubt the abolition of primogeniture and of entails would be favourable both to the breaking up of large estates and to the development of small holdings. But the division of the large farms is making good progress in England in spite of the present conditions of land-owning. The social and political counteracting tendencies just described do indeed hinder, but do not prevent, the economically profitable development. This, however, is a fact which deserves some attention.

For the first time in English agrarian history, the system of capitalistic concentration, as applied to the land, is showing serious weakness. So far, it has developed hand in hand with the economic needs of agriculture. Large estates and large farms went excellently together. At the present time the interest of the landowner, economically speaking, would be in the formation of small farms. But his interests are only partly economic. They are also social and political, and to these latter the small farm system does not correspond. The social and political interests, moreover, are often as strong as, or even stronger than, the desire to obtain the highest possible money return. Here lies the danger for the future development of English agriculture, and the defect of the hitherto economically satisfactory system of capitalist agriculture. If land-owners prize the non-economic aspects of their estates so highly as to

¹ *Final Report*, 1897, p. 355.

² Brodrick, *op. cit.* pp. 393 f. "The owner of many thousand acres...is almost sure to be more or less in the hands of his agent," etc.

be willing to pay a considerable price for them; if on political grounds, or from negligence, carelessness or ignorance they prefer to lower the rents of their large corn-growing tenants rather than to support those tenants who are prepared to wring greater results from the soil by the sweat of their brows, then they have certainly become monopolists of the worst type, and from an economic point of view are a superfluous class. Every modification of rent allowed to a corn-growing farmer on land where small holdings would make a greater profit is a premium offered by the landowner for the maintenance of an economically retrograde agriculture. Land has so far become a luxury. It produces, with the help of privately provided bounties in the form of lowered rents, commodities, such as corn, which could be imported more cheaply from abroad; whereas if managed on purely capitalist principles it would only produce commodities in which it could compete on equal terms with the foreigner.

Such is the conflict between the problem of the proper unit of holding and the problem of landownership as the two stand in England at present: and so much it has been necessary to premise in order to explain the origin of the movement which from 1880 onwards has demanded the multiplication of small holdings by means of State interference. The measures passed for this purpose, and above all the Small Holdings Act of 1907, may well be described as measures of agrarian reform. For they are attempts to reform the present conditions of landownership in England in so far as they have been found a hindrance to a healthy development of agricultural small holdings.

CHAPTER VIII

LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN FAVOUR OF SMALL HOLDINGS

(a) *The Small Holdings Acts.*

THE series of Acts aiming at the formation of small holdings begins first of all with Acts for the creation of allotments. Such are the Allotments Act of 1887 (50 and 51 Vict. c. 48) and the Allotments Act of 1890 (53 and 54 Vict. c. 65). There follows the most significant Act of the series, the Small Holdings Act of 1892 (55 and 56 Vict. c. 31), aimed exclusively at the creation of small holdings, whereas the Local Government Act of 1894 (56 and 57 Vict. c. 73) is only of importance as regards allotments, and therefore hardly concerns us here. Finally comes the last and most important measure, the Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1907 (7 Ed. VII. c. 54), amending that of 1892, and aiming at a fundamental reform of the previous methods of State creation both of small tenancies and small properties. It was preceded by the Report of the Departmental Committee appointed by the Board of Agriculture, which sat in 1905 and 1906, and took much evidence as to the results and failures of the previous Acts. This Committee consisted of men of the highest qualifications as authorities on agriculture or agricultural policy, among whom were the former President of the Board of Agriculture, Lord Onslow; its present President, Lord Carrington, whose services to the small holdings' movement have already been mentioned; the well-known champion of "three acres and a cow," Mr Jesse Collings; Major Craigie, the official agricultural statistician; Mr R. A. Yerburgh, M.P., the pioneer of agricultural co-operation in England; Sir F. A. Channing, and others. Among the expert witnesses who appeared before it were small farmers, land-agents, landlords, and various authorities on agricultural policy; but, unfortunately, no agricultural labourers. The Majority Report (signed only with certain reservations by some members) was presented to the President of the Board on December 10, 1906. But

its recommendations were only in part the basis of the Bill of 1907, since the change of government which took place in the meantime naturally meant that the Bill, when introduced, would represent the views of the Liberal Party, which differed essentially from those of the Committee and the Report. The Small Holdings Bill of the Liberal Party it was which became law on August 28, 1907.

To understand the whole significance of this measure it is necessary to outline the provisions of the Act of 1892, which the new Act amended. Those provisions were briefly as follows:—Every County Council was empowered to create small holdings if a sufficient demand were proved to exist; that is to say, if any person laid a petition to that effect before the Council, and the Council convinced itself that there was such a demand. The State was to provide the necessary capital for the purchase of land at a low rate of interest, but the purchaser must pay down on the spot at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of the price. He might leave upon the land a perpetual rent equal to the interest on $\frac{1}{4}$ of the remaining capital; but the other $\frac{3}{4}$ was to be paid off in half-yearly instalments of principal and interest. Where the applicant was not in a position to purchase land, the Council might let a small holding to him. But such a holding was not to be more than 15 acres in area, nor of a higher value than would be represented by a rent of £15 per annum. The main object was thus the creation of small properties and not of small tenancies.

The result of this legislation by no means corresponded to the hopes of its promoters. Although the Act obliged every County Council to form a Committee to receive and consider petitions, and although such petitions were received in 27 counties of England and Wales and 14 Scottish counties, in the ten years 1892 to 1902 only 652 acres had been acquired for the purposes of the Act. Only five English counties and one Scottish county bought land, and three English counties rented land, for small holdings. Between 1902 and 1906 only two cases were known in which an English County Council had purchased land under the Act. In one case 46 acres, in the other 92 acres had been bought.

The question arises as to why so promising a measure failed to accomplish the "home colonisation" expected of it.

The most natural explanation would be that the legislation corresponded to no economic need. But neither the witnesses before the Committee of 1905-6 nor the Report of the Committee gives any countenance to such an hypothesis. On the contrary, the whole enquiry showed plainly that a lively demand for small holdings

existed throughout the country, and that any practicable method of facilitating their revival would be more than ever welcome from an economic point of view¹. If no explanation of the failure of the Act of 1892 is to be found in this direction, then the next possibility which will suggest itself will be that the disappointing result was due to some inadequacy in the administration of the Act. The Report of 1906 pointed to this as a possibility; and undoubtedly with justification. Sometimes special reasons would lead a County Council to leave the Act unused. In one county, where no less than 349 petitions were received, "it was decided that as 'the rate-payers were already burdened with heavy taxation it was unfair to impose upon them the extra cost of carrying out the Act, an experiment which ought to be borne by the State.'" In many cases it was difficult to gauge the strength of the demand for small holdings. Many of those who were quite likely to desire them remained ignorant of the existence of the Act. In Worcestershire, Norfolk and Lincolnshire the application of the Act was traceable to the initiative of certain enthusiastic members of the County Council, and their action was fully justified. The Report of 1906, which was in favour of leaving the main principles of the law unchanged, laid special emphasis on these cases, as showing that the difficulties were only difficulties of administration. It proposed that a Central Board should share the administrative powers with the local authorities, a proposal which was incorporated in the Bill ultimately introduced, and now appears as the first part of the new Act (sections 1—5).

According to these sections, the Board of Agriculture is to act as central authority for this purpose. It appoints certain Small Holdings Commissioners, i.e. officials who are to seek to ascertain what demand there is for small holdings in the various counties and how far it appears practicable and desirable to satisfy this demand. It is an important point that not merely the County Councils, but also the smaller bodies, the District and Parish Councils, are able to supply the Commissioners with materials on which to form their judgment, so that the County Councils, which have so often shown themselves disinclined to take the matter up, are no longer the sole judges of the questions at issue. If the Board of Agriculture considers that the creation of small holdings in a certain district is desirable and

¹ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes*, pp. 444 and 445 of the index. Cp. also the instructive book by Miss Jebb (now Mrs Wilkins) on *The Small Holdings of England, 1907*, passim.

² *Small Holdings Report, 1906*, p. 11, § 46.

practicable, it can require the County Council to produce a detailed scheme for the purpose. If the Council fails to fulfil this duty, the Board itself may prepare such a scheme, obtaining the necessary information by means of a public enquiry, as it can always do in the case of a difference of opinion between itself and a County Council. The scheme must then be carried out, according to the Acts of 1892 and 1907, by the County Council. If the Council again refuses to do its duty, the Commissioners may take over the work, and in that case all rights given by the Acts to the County Council pass to the Commissioners, but the County Council or other local authority concerned is responsible for the expenditure incurred.

It is evident that these provisions put upon the County Council the pressure which has so far been wanting. That the smaller local authorities, which hitherto have had to proceed through the County Council, can now appeal direct to the central authority (see Part III, 26 (7) of the Act of 1907), which is to be carefully and constantly observant of the whole question, is in itself a great step in advance: and the fact that in case of need the Commissioners can take action at last provides a guarantee that any really well-founded demand for small holdings will be satisfied.

Nevertheless it would be a mistake to ascribe the miscarriage of the Act of 1892 solely to the failure of County Councils to carry it into effect. In spite of the anxiety of the Departmental Committee to put that cause in the forefront, it could not be concealed, in view both of the evidence of experts and the facts they brought forward, that the whole machinery of the Act was defective, and in parts faulty, and that some of its most essential features needed radical reform.

This was especially the case with the provisions respecting the acquisition of land. Even where a Council did not lack the goodwill and the energy necessary to carry out the Act, it was powerless to proceed if there were no land suitable for division at its disposal. "Large farms, it is true, come into the market from time to time," wrote a man of experience, Mr C. R. Buxton, in a memorandum which is well worth reading¹, "but small quantities of land are often quite impossible to obtain." The conditions noted above as enhancing the value of land in England increase the difficulty in this case also; it is indeed partly created by the long-established customs and traditions of English landownership. The exchange value of a large estate is, for social and political reasons, higher than the price which small

¹ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes, p. 431.*

agriculturists can afford to pay for it when cut up into areas of 5 to 50 acres. In particular, the landowner hopes, by selling a comparatively large extent of land to some wealthy man, fond of sport and not particular about making a profit on the estate, to get for those parts of the land which are of little value for agricultural purposes a price which it will indeed be worth the while of such a purchaser to pay, from his point of view, but which no mere agriculturist could afford. When the Small Holdings Bill of 1892 was before Parliament, a member of an eminent firm of land-agents wrote a letter to the Press, quoted by Mr Shaw Lefevre¹, in which he stated:—"My firm has on its books for sale a considerable number "of landed properties of from 1,000 to 10,000 acres or more. In most "of them the land lies together, and many of them consist of a whole "parish, or of two or three adjoining parishes. It cannot be expected "that in these cases the vendors will be willing to sell to local "authorities 50 or 100 acres...for the purpose of creating a number "of small freeholders or leaseholders....The entirety of a property "within its boundaries is a great attraction to purchasers. The "planting of a number of small freeholders in the midst of it might "greatly interfere with the amenities of the estate, as they are generally "understood, and with the sporting rights over the same. We have "many other smaller properties for sale, of 100 to 1000 acres. Most "of these are of a residential character, where we could not advise "vendors to sell off part for the creation of small ownerships." It was therefore no wonder that in a report on the Act of 1892, published in 1895, the complaint was made that the County Councils were hardly anywhere in a position to obtain land. Either it was not to be had at all, or not upon reasonable terms. On the other hand it was a perfectly justifiable provision of the Act that land should not be bought unless the price was such that it could be repaid by the small agriculturist who was to be the ultimate purchaser (cf. Section 18(1)). The County Council was consequently obliged to avoid paying more for the land than its capitalised annual value. But in the result it was often impossible to purchase at all. Thus in one Lincolnshire parish containing 21,133 acres, only 146 acres were available for the purposes of the Act.

It was on the ground of this experience that a demand for compulsory purchase began to be heard on all sides. When in 1892 the Small Holdings Bill of that year was under discussion in and outside Parliament, there was no possibility of carrying such a clause,

¹ Shaw Lefevre, *op. cit.* p. 268.

though the idea had been carefully considered by the original promoters of the Bill. The Conservative Party would never have consented to such a thing. In their view the contemplated legislation might be a useful means of keeping a greater proportion of the rural population on the land, but they would have nothing to do with anything which might recall the attacks of Land Reformers upon the rights of property. "I myself am strongly against compulsion," said Lord Salisbury in February 1892, "at all events at this stage; because I do not believe it to be needed, and because I am sure that compulsion will create ill-will¹." Lord Salisbury thus left it to experience to prove the necessity for compulsion. The evidence which he demanded was certainly not slow to appear. Even by 1893 Mr Shaw Lefevre, in his excellent book on *Agrarian Tenures*, was able to say "there is little hope of obtaining such land, unless power to purchase it by compulsion be conferred on local authorities²." The Liberal Party were from that time forward zealous advocates of the introduction of provision for compulsion. Mr Herbert Samuel, in his book on *Liberalism*, published in 1902, describes this as the most important necessary reform in the Act of 1892. The results of the Committee of Enquiry of 1905-6, as already indicated, confirm the proposition. In fact, the system of compulsory purchase had already amply justified itself in the case of the creation of allotments, where, under the Allotments Acts and the Local Government Act of 1894, the District and Parish Councils could either buy or rent land compulsorily, if so instructed by the County Council.

These Acts had obviously been much more effective than the Small Holdings Act. Between 1887 and 1897, 12,516 acres had been acquired under the Allotments Acts by the local authorities, and 3785 acres between 1897 and 1902. No doubt the question of allotments depends on other considerations of agricultural and rural economy than the question of small holdings, and the chances of the multiplication of the former were originally better. But the difficulty of acquiring land is common to both problems: so that the working of the Allotments Acts clearly proved that the possibility of compulsory purchase by the authority concerned could considerably lessen that difficulty.

It had also proved, however, that the possibility of compulsion by

¹ Quoted in Shaw Lefevre, *op. cit.* p. 86.

² *Ibid.*, p. 273. It is remarkable that Mr Shaw Lefevre (now Lord Eversley) advocated as long ago as 1893 precisely the measures which have now become law; *cp. op. cit.* pp. 270-273.

no means necessarily meant that resort would be had to that weapon. Between 1897 and 1902, 3576 acres were acquired by the Councils by way of agreement with the landowners, and only 206 by compulsion¹. Various cases were brought to the notice of the Committee of 1905-6 where "the mere existence of the (compulsory) powers has secured the provision of land where otherwise none would have been forthcoming²." The possibility of expropriation put pressure upon the landowner. It also prevented the evil often complained of before the Committee, that the price of land offered to the authorities was often far above the "fair market price." For if this happened to be the case the Council could use their powers of compulsion. It was thus a simple statement of fact when Sir F. A. Channing wrote that "compulsory powers, if too costly for frequent use, at least tend to bring about acquisition by agreement³."

Even the Conservatively-minded Majority Report could not leave this proposition out of account. But it confined itself to the suggestion that such powers should be vested in the central authority, namely the Board of Agriculture, and only in the case of purchase. Even that, however, was a step forward, as compared with Lord Salisbury's pronouncement of fourteen years earlier. The Liberal Bill went further. It did not take the Committee's view that the right of expropriation should be confined to the central Department, which would be unlikely to use it "arbitrarily⁴." On the contrary, section 6(2) of the new Act provides that "If a County Council are unable to acquire by agreement and on reasonable terms suitable land for the purpose aforesaid, they may acquire land compulsorily in accordance with the provisions of this Act." This power, as has been shown above, passes in case of need to the central authority. It includes the right of compulsory hiring, as well as of purchase. And in the former possibility lies hid the most significant and decisive reform of the whole measure.

For the great hindrance to the effectiveness of the Act of 1892 had obviously not lain simply in the fact that the County Councils found it difficult to acquire land. From the very first, experience under the Act brought a second problem to the fore: namely, whether the purchase of land by the local authority and the formation of small properties rather than small tenancies is the best means to pursue for the revival of small holdings in England.

¹ *Return to the House of Commons*, May 28, 1903 (*Local Government Board*), p. 2^a.

² *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, *Minutes*, p. 432.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 52, § 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33, § 43.

The pioneers of the whole movement were two men who at that time were prominent Radicals, namely Mr Joseph Chamberlain and Mr Jesse Collings. In a very interesting publication of the year 1885, which bore the *imprimatur* of Mr Chamberlain and was entitled *The Radical Programme*, it was expressly stated that—"It will be found that in a rich country like England, with the desire for land which is generally found among the wealthy classes, there will be but small chance for either farmers or labourers who are not capitalists to raise themselves out of the ranks of tenants and wage-receivers. Some special legislation will be needed to prevent monopoly and accumulation of land by a few persons, and to bring about, or rather to restore, the interest and connection between the cultivator and the soil which exist in other countries, and which in former times obtained in England. Occupying ownership and peasant proprietary established under certain conditions and by the aid of the State, acting through local authorities, seem to be the direction in which these objects can best be secured¹." Peasant proprietorship was thus the aim of the first promoters of the movement: and accordingly the Act of 1892 favoured the creation of small properties rather than of small tenancies. Such tenancies, it will be remembered, might not be of greater extent than 15 acres (whereas small properties might be anything up to 50 acres), and then might only be let if the County Council was of opinion that the prospective tenant was not in a position to purchase such a holding.

But in spite of the intentions of the pioneers and the provisions of the Act, the expectations of a revival of small ownership were disappointed to a very remarkable degree. Of the 569 acres of land acquired by the County Councils between 1892 and 1902, only 162 had been sold to their occupiers, whereas 373 were let. The explanation is not obscure. The interposition of the local authority did indeed facilitate the acquisition of land by the small agriculturist in many ways; but it did not do away with the fundamental difficulty, viz. that he had to pay, in the exchange value of the land, more than its capitalised annual value. Also, though he only had to pay down $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total price, that sum was no inconsiderable one, especially as, if the Council provided the necessary buildings, etc., $\frac{1}{3}$ of their cost was included. Or if the preparation of the holding was not undertaken by the Council, then the purchaser had to be prepared with a still larger amount of capital. He must also be provided with the necessary working capital; so that merely to take over such a property would

¹ *The Radical Programme*, 1885, pp. 145 f.

demand a sum of ready money which would be more than most of the persons in question would possess. The amount may be reckoned at about £400 for a holding of 30 acres; and the small holder would then still have the annual instalments of the remainder of the purchase-money as a considerable burden lying upon him for the future.

But if the purchase of a holding thus makes demands upon the capital of the small agriculturist which he either cannot meet or does not consider it worth his while to incur, he is on the other hand much more frequently in a position to invest his capital profitably in renting a small farm. If the County Council can take land at the usual rent, and will re-let it to the small man at a rent only so much higher as corresponds to the expenditure incurred, the latter is as a rule quite able so to increase the profitableness of the holding as to pay the enhanced rent. He can then apply his whole capital as working capital, instead of sinking it in the land. A witness before the Committee of 1906, Mr H. H. Smith, sets out very intelligibly the considerations which affect the small agriculturist on the taking over of a small holding:—"He does not look forward like the French "peasant. County Council Committees who have sat to hear applications for land under the Small Holdings Act have been sadly "disappointed to find what a very small number of the applicants "were willing to accept their holdings under the purchase system: by "far the greater number of them are desirous of renting only, and that "for short terms, the general desire being for a yearly tenancy. This "may possibly have arisen from the fact that the future of agriculture "in this country is still uncertain; and no one can say that we have "touched the bottom of the depression. Therefore the labourer who "aspires to become a small farmer may hesitate to embark his earnings "in an enterprise which binds him to a fixed rent, which rent must be "paid, whether matters get worse or not....For the English peasant to "become a proprietor under the existing Act means that he will for fifty "years—that is the whole stretch of his life—have to pay a greater sum "annually for the land which he is to make his freehold, than if he were "merely renting it; in addition to this he has to find a sum to be paid "down representing one-fifth of the purchase-money. His proprietary "instincts are not strong, and he does not care to pinch himself in "order to benefit posterity. Moreover he argues 'the capital I am "finding as part purchase-money of my holding if added to the money "I must necessarily find to stock it, will enable me to take a larger "farm as a leasing or renting tenant, than I can possibly take under the

“purchase system : I will therefore go for leasing, because I can get a “bigger income for myself.’ A Frenchman will probably argue the “other way, and say: ‘True, under the purchasing system I can only “take a smaller holding than I could under the leasing system, but I “am saving money under the first system in a sure and almost im- “perceptible manner, as every day I am nearing the time when the “holding will become a freehold which I shall be able to bequeath to “my family.’ This apparently does not appeal to the English peasants, “and the passion for ownership does not exist among them to any- “thing like the same extent that it does in many other nations¹.”

It is a curious fact that the last remnants of the lesser yeomanry disappeared in the period 1760 to 1815, because, in view of the high price of corn then ruling, the small man found it more profitable to take a large holding as farmer than to retain his position as a small owner. He sold his land, attracted by the higher income to be made on an arable farm of some hundreds of acres. The economics of the unit of holding were the determining factor in that movement. But it is not any question as to the unit of holding which causes the small capitalist of the present day to prefer tenancy to ownership. A small holding is now more profitable than a large holding. The determining factor today is the problem of ownership itself, namely the contrast between the exchange value of the land and the comparatively small return to be obtained from it.

The Departmental Committee could not well ignore the various cases cited and expressions of opinion given in proof of this tendency to prefer tenancy to ownership. The Report mentions yet other causes making in the same direction; e.g. a fear on the part of the small capitalist that some new agricultural crisis might depreciate the value of his land after he had bought it; the difficult question of inheritance; the desire of small agriculturists to begin with a few acres only, but to be able to increase their holdings as their savings grow, an aspiration more easily fulfilled by a tenant than by a proprietor. These are all no doubt real elements in the preference for tenancy, though the relatively high cost of land is certainly its main cause. The Committee, however, did not draw the conclusion that the Act of 1892 should be so amended as to correspond to the actual needs of the day. On the contrary, it held fast to the principles of the old Act, and only recommended certain changes directed to facilitate the purchase of small holdings.

Its argument was that the great advantage to be expected from such

¹ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes, qu. 3733.*

legislation could only arise from the creation of a number of small holders with a permanent interest in the land and in their own soil. It had been proved, they said, "that in some parts of the country the 'magic of property' is entirely appreciated. It was pointed out that a man who can give a year's notice to his landlord is much more likely to be attracted to the towns than one whose all is invested in the piece of land which he cultivates, and that a small occupying freeholder will gladly do the work of two labourers for the earnings of one¹."

Arthur Young, writing in the early years of the nineteenth century of his visit to the small proprietors of the Isle of Axholme, had spoken of "the magic of property" as there manifested. This phrase has sent his name down to posterity as that of a champion of peasant proprietorship, though as a matter of fact he was the most zealous of advocates for capitalist large farming. Wherever the creation of small properties is in question in England to-day, there that classic phrase does duty. It naturally appears, therefore, in the Report of 1906. "The magic of property," it is there claimed, though not everywhere present in the England of to-day, might very well be developed among small agriculturists. It might also be used as a means to bind the countryman to the soil and to prevent the depopulation of the rural districts. So far, in the Committee's opinion, "the advantages of ownership" had not as a rule "been sufficiently forcibly put before those who desire to cultivate land²."

Therefore, in spite of experience, which was all against the possibility of the revival of peasant proprietorship on any considerable scale, the Committee only recommended that the sum to be paid down by purchasers should be reduced from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$, while it left untouched the question of any facilitation of small tenancies. The proposal to offer landlords extensive facilities for borrowing from public funds would indeed, if carried out, have increased the possibility of the creation of such tenancies; but it would have had no bearing on their formation by the local authorities.

This view of the Committee, that the Government should mainly concern itself with the provision of small properties only, was shared by, and indeed was largely based on the support of, Mr Jesse Collings, the original champion of the Act of 1892. He remains now as then a staunch upholder of the position that any multiplication of small holdings must be in the first place a multiplication of small properties. He protested in a Minority Report of his own against the Committee's

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, p. 29, § 123; see also the whole section on *Tenants or Freeholders*, pp. 28-30.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 29 f.

proposal to give credit to the landlords, and emphasised, on the other hand, the necessity for further measures favouring the creation of small ownership. These measures he also discussed in a book published in 1906¹, and embodied in a Bill brought in by him but never passed into law. But the advocacy of "occupying ownership" at least was common to him and to the Majority Report. From this view there naturally developed strong opposition to the system of compulsory hiring of land as advocated from the Liberal side for some years previously. Mr Collings' arguments on this point were practically the same as those of the Report, which said that:—"The exercise of compulsory powers of this kind would involve the creation of a system of tenant right, under which the ownership of land would, in effect, be divided between two or even more persons and authorities. The result would be, in the opinion of the Committee, that the sense of responsibility which should accompany ownership would cease to exist, and also that endless disputes and litigation would arise between landlords and tenants. Another result would be to provoke, quite unnecessarily, the hostility of all large farmers and landowners... Experience has proved that a system of dual ownership of land is one which, under ordinary economic conditions, cannot be permanent, and which, while it lasts, is fatal to the proper maintenance of holdings, to harmony between landlord and tenant, and to the prosperity of agriculture²."

Some courage was required to appeal to this "sense of responsibility," in view of the fact that so many English landlords regard their land in the first place as a means of obtaining sport, social consideration, or political advantage; but the reference is a clear indication of the spirit by which the Report was inspired. So far as it recognised the principle of compulsion at all, namely only in the case of purchase and only by the authority of the central Department, it was where it could be of little value. It was much more important that the right of compulsion should be extended to the authority which first comes into play, i.e. the County Council; and that it should be available not only for the purchase, but also for the hire of land. These necessities were taken into account by the Liberal Bill and by the Act of 1907, and it may be said that it is precisely these provisions which give the Act its character as a genuine measure of reform.

The Act of 1907, although it stands for the principle that the creation of small tenancies is to be favoured, by no means refuses to

¹ Jesse Collings, *Land Reform*, 1906.

² *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, p. 33, § 144.

forward the formation of small properties. But by the abolition of the limitation of small tenancies to an area of 15 acres and a rent of £15 (see section 4 (2) of the old Act) this form of holding is no longer put at a disadvantage: and, as already stated, the right of compulsion is extended to the case of hiring as well as to that of purchase. In both cases it is naturally provided that the right shall only be exercised "if a County Council are unable to acquire by agreement and on reasonable terms suitable land for the purpose" (sec. 6 (2) and sec. 22). Naturally also land which is not to be considered as in agricultural occupation is exempted from the possibility of compulsory acquisition. The limitations under this head (see section 30) are very extensive. They apply to parks, gardens, recreation grounds, home farms, etc., so that the landlord cannot be expropriated from any of his proper "demesne-lands." But as, in other cases, purchase as well as hiring is included in the provisions for compulsion, and as on the other hand hiring is no longer put at a disadvantage as compared with purchase when the procedure is by agreement, it seems probable that the choice as between hiring and buying will in future be decided mainly on the ground of the economic needs in the particular case.

This important provision for compulsory hiring necessitated a number of minor regulations, of which some account must be given here. The hiring must be by way of lease, for not less than fourteen or more than thirty-five years (section 26 (2)). But the authority may, by observing certain terms of notice, renew the lease for another period of at least fourteen or at most thirty-five years, again compulsorily, if an agreement cannot be arrived at (section 27 (1)).

To determine the rent to be paid by the authority to the owner, the valuer is to keep in view the following points (see Schedule I, Part II (4)):(1) the rent at which the land has hitherto been let, and the value at which it is assessed for rating purposes, (2) the loss (if any) falling upon the owner in consequence of the division of a holding, (3) the length and other conditions of the lease. Under this head any reservations made by the landlord, as of rights of hunting or fishing, are to be taken into account. (4) But there shall not be taken into account any future increment of value for any purpose other than that under consideration, in so far as the landlord has the right to demand the land back for such expressly defined purposes. That is to say that if a landlord, within the duration of the lease, wants his land, or a part of it, for building, mining or any other industrial purpose, it will, under certain conditions, be put at his disposal (section 33 (1)); so that there is no need to take

account of such possibilities in setting the rent. Provision is also made for a re-valuation for the purpose of determining the rent if the lease is renewed (section 27 (2)). The valuer is not to take into account (1) improvements for which the authority could have demanded compensation in case it had not renewed the lease. (2) Any increased value of the holding arising from possible other uses to which the landlord might put it within the duration of the lease, in so far as he has the right to reclaim the land for such purposes. (3) Any increased value arising from the fact that the authority has created other small holdings in the neighbourhood. (4) Any decrease of value for which the landlord could have claimed compensation from the authority in case the lease had not been renewed.

It will be seen that the aim of these regulations is so to fix the rent that throughout the lease the landlord may be receiving about the sum he was receiving before the Council took over the land. Any increase of value which may arise from the creation of the small holdings upon it belongs to the Council, or, if the latter so arranges, to the small holder. In this way it was sought to meet the fear so often expressed that any such enhanced value would in the long run simply fall to the landowner in the form of an increased rent.

But if at the termination of a lease the land is again placed at the disposal of the owner the further question arises as to the manner in which the Council or its tenant is to be compensated for improvements. The Act provides (section 35 (2)) that for this purpose the Agricultural Holdings Acts of 1883-1906 shall apply, and that "the amount of compensation payable to the Council for those improvements shall be such sum as fairly represents the increase (if any) in the value to the landlord and his successors in title of the holding due to those improvements." These Acts aim at ensuring to any outgoing tenant proper compensation for his expenditure and improvements. But it has been found by no means easy to guarantee to such tenants easy and effective settlement of their complicated claims. Even the latest measures have not satisfied the representatives of the farming interest, as may be seen by a resolution passed at a recent meeting of the Central Chamber of Agriculture¹:—"That the Agricultural Holdings Act being the basis on which farming is conducted, should be so amended that the capital which the farmer invests in his holding is as safe as if the holding belonged to him, and that nothing should stand in the way of the tenant making the land produce all it can." "This resolution is well conceived,"

¹ Cited by Collings, *op. cit.* p. 244.

comments Mr Jesse Collings, "but it is absolutely impossible to carry it into law. The question is full of complications. A farmer may be a man of good judgment or bad, and to enact that he should receive compensation on leaving his farm for all that he has done, without the consent of his landlord, in the way of what he considers to be improvement, would lead to difficulties, and certainly to litigation. Some of the outlay he had made might be considered by an incoming tenant, as well as by the landlord, as useless or of small value. Other work, such as the planting of orchards, etc., would require some years to show whether or not it was worth paying for at all¹." It must be remembered, however, in reading Mr Collings' comments, that to him, as a champion of small ownership, the present failure to satisfy the claimants of tenants' right is a useful weapon for attack upon the whole system of tenancy. Things are not quite so bad as he sees them. But still it is obvious that this question of compensation does offer peculiar difficulties in the case of small holdings. For the small farmer is probably a poor man, to whom every shilling sunk in his land represents much more than it does to the well-to-do large farmer; it is generally recognised that he improves the land, by his more intensive methods, much more than the large farmer does; while on the other hand, being as a rule a man of comparatively little education, he is hardly in a position to realise and enforce his rights. If it is attempted to give him protection by means of special legislation, as in the case of the Market Gardeners' Compensation Act, a danger arises that the landlord will be still less inclined to create such holdings, for fear of having to pay down large sums in compensation to his tenants at the end of their lease. This tendency is aggravated when, as in the particular Act cited, such compensation has to be paid for improvements undertaken without the landlord's consent.

The difficulty of the question, however, is considerably mitigated when a mediating body, namely the local authority, intervenes between the landlord and the tenant. For it is to be supposed that the Council, upon which will fall the duty of compensating the small farmer on his giving up his holding, will recognise his just claims more readily than would the landowner himself; and that the tenant will find it easier to get those claims settled than if he himself had to treat with his landlord. It is specially important to note that the Act of 1907 enacts that the provisions of the Market Gardeners' Compensation Act shall be applied to all small holdings created by local authorities, so that their tenants can demand compensation for

¹ Collings, *loc. cit.*

improvements made without their consent, unless they had expressly prohibited the improvement in question (see section 35 (1)). The landowner in his turn becomes liable for such improvements, so far as they have actually increased the value of his land, when the Council's lease comes to an end.

When all these implications of compulsory hiring of land are taken into consideration, a circumstance which at first sight seemed surprising becomes quite comprehensible; namely, that the great majority of English landlords, together with the closely-connected Conservative Party, fought much more strenuously against compulsory hiring than against compulsory purchase. Even the Committee of 1905-6, as has been noticed above, was prepared to come to terms with the principle of compulsory purchase: but it was hotly opposed to any idea of compulsory hiring. It was this point, too, that met with the strongest opposition from the Conservatives when the Bill was before Parliament. For, as will be now evident to the reader, compulsory hiring meant that the landlord would be stripped of his right to set the conditions of a lease at his pleasure¹. The greater part of the demand made under the name of "the three Fs" is thus indirectly conceded.

These "Three Fs" consist in a series of principles which have been incorporated in the land laws of Ireland, and which certain reformers have from about 1890 onwards desired to see applied to English conditions also. They concern (1) Fair Rent; that is to say the fixing of rents by authority at an amount which will leave a suitable amount of profit to the tenant; (2) Fixity of Tenure; i.e. provision that a tenant who cultivates his land reasonably well and duly pays his rent may not be given notice to quit; and finally (3) Free Sale; i.e. the right of the out-going tenant to demand from his successor compensation for improvements made by him, or in some way to be able, on leaving the farm, to treat such improvements as saleable property. The Conservative Party in England has strongly protested against these demands in the interests of the landed aristocracy, using the argument that to concede them would create a divided property in land, and that in consequence the relation between landlord and tenant would be vitiated. On the other hand the demand has developed specially strongly among

¹ A characteristic expression of the landlord's point of view is to be found in the *Estate Book*, 1908, p. 56:—"Compulsory sale is often hardship enough, though it is necessary in certain circumstances; but to recognise a man's right of property in land, and yet to take it out of his control, and to keep it or return it at will is tyranny and injustice" (Mr Bear).

the small farmers, who are naturally interested in every attack upon the right of the owner to do what he will with his own land. They recognise that as tenants they are in a worse position relatively to the landlord than are the large farmers. Large farmers, at the present day, are comparatively few and are therefore sought after. When they come to take a farm, they are often met by no competitors. They can therefore dictate their terms in a way impossible to the small farmer, faced as he is in many cases by twenty or more rival bidders. Fair Rent and Fixity of Tenure are under such conditions much better assured to the large farmer than they are to the small man, and the former is therefore less interested than the latter in the possibility of State intervention.

The Act of 1907, as has already been shown, provides for a Fair Rent, so far as newly-created holdings are concerned. The landowner is obliged to let to the local authority, and to take a rent estimated by a "fair" valuation, not unduly driven up by the presence of a crowd of small agriculturists outbidding each other, but based in the first place upon the amount hitherto received for the area. He cannot demand an increased rent at pleasure when the first lease has run out, and so exploit the increased profit which the tenant has perhaps just begun to draw. For the Council is at liberty to conclude a new lease and again to fix the rent according to the same "fair" considerations as before.

Fixity of Tenure is also guaranteed by the Act to some extent, since the Council, acting as landlord, may only give notice to quit to any tenant on grounds defined in the Acts of 1892 and 1907, or because he does not fulfil his obligations. The occupier can no longer be turned out of his holding, at least within the duration of the Council's lease, for such reasons as the improvement of the shooting or hunting of the estate, or some personal antipathy towards him on the part of the landlord; on the ground of his political opinions, or of his system of cultivation; or simply from the landlord's sudden desire to add the acres in question to his home farm. Even if conditions arise which allow the landowner to reclaim his land, the tenant has a right to compensation (see Schedule I, Pt II (5)).

As regards Free Sale, it has been pointed out above that the small holder's claim to compensation can be much more easily and effectively made when the local authority intervenes between him and the landlord; and this is considerable progress in the direction indicated by that phrase.

Every landlord, however, is perpetually faced, under this Act,

by the possibility that he may lose, over some part of his property, what have hitherto been the most important of his functions as a landowner. The rent to be paid for the land may be authoritatively prescribed for him, if the County Council should see fit to hire it by compulsion. The duration of the lease will also be dictated to him. Improvements made by the occupier without his consent must, if they increase the value of the land, be paid for by him at the conclusion of the lease. Very little is left of his rights of property, and it is quite comprehensible that a Party which represented his interests should have objected more strongly to such an attack on those rights than to the proposal to compel the sale of a few hundred acres at a reasonable price.

The powers of the County Councils were still further extended by the Act of 1907 to enable them to support co-operative associations which may aim at the creation of small holdings or at assisting their occupiers by means of credit, co-operative purchase or co-operative marketing of goods. The Councils may even call such Associations into existence and use them as their "agents" (section 39 (1—4)). This provision opens the way to a combination of official action with voluntary effort which may prove of the greatest benefit. Co-operative purchase of land and the foundation of a sort of colony of small holders by co-operative means (not, of course, cultivation on a co-operative basis) may have excellent results. This has been proved by the various Small Holdings Associations, especially those of Norfolk and Lincolnshire, which have done remarkably well in the creation of prosperous little farms. In fact, the results of such co-operative undertakings have tended to produce an opinion that the official attempts were often fore-doomed to failure precisely because a County Council cannot proceed in the same eminently sensible manner as a private association. The division of the land, the erection of buildings, the fencing, drainage work and so forth are all certainly effected more cheaply by private effort than by a local authority. From this point of view the well-known agricultural author, Mr Edwin A. Pratt, is right in commending the co-operative creation of small holdings as against State action¹. But before the co-operative association can act it must be able to acquire the necessary land, and that under conditions such as to make the formation of small holdings possible. How dark the outlook was in that direction was shown by the evidence given to the Committee of 1905-6 by Mr Winfrey, himself the President of two such Associa-

¹ E. A. Pratt, *The Transition in Agriculture*, 1906, pp. 260 f.

tions. Mr Pratt indeed argues that "a trustworthy society or combination" would offer to the landlord the necessary security for his purchase-money or his annual rent. But the division of the land is necessarily an experiment even for an association, and the landlord might well remain long in doubt as to its power to pay, however convinced he might be of its goodwill.

But where an Association is backed by a County Council, so that the fear of compulsory hiring is before the landlord's eyes, and the Council becomes security for the Association for a certain amount, as by law it may, the way to a satisfactory agreement becomes much easier. The powers given by the Act of 1907 enable the official body to work in with the voluntary association. The latter retains its economic advantages, but it is strengthened, where it feels the need, by the authoritative backing of the Council. It is always to be remembered that the authority of the State only comes into play, in this matter of the creation of small holdings, for the purpose of removing hindrances from the path of a socially and economically beneficial development. Where small holdings develop spontaneously, or where voluntary associations find it easy to call them into being, there the Council remains out of action. But where difficulties stand in the way of the satisfaction of a real demand for such holdings, there is the sphere of the Acts of 1892 and 1907. And here again the authority attempts in the first place to bring about a voluntary agreement. Only if such an agreement cannot be arrived at does the provision for compulsion come into force. The greater the hindrances, the stronger are the means at the disposal of the authorities for their abolition.

The essential provisions of the Act of 1907 have now been outlined; and it should have become evident why it is that the Act may justly be entitled an agrarian reform. It aims at so transforming the conditions of landownership that they may no longer be a hindrance to the development of small holdings in English agriculture, suited as that development is to the modern circumstances of the agricultural market. The miscarriage of the Act of 1892 in no way proved that the small holdings movement has no future. On the contrary, the strong demand for such holdings, as brought before the County Councils, and the manifold successes of grouped small holdings where such were created, showed that the economic conditions, so far as they depend on the unit of holding, are favourable to the development. But what the results of the Act did prove was that the existing conditions of landownership were so unfavourable as to counteract the favourable economic conditions; and that some more

radical and incisive action on the part of the authorities was necessary if any solution of the question of the unit of holding were to contribute to agrarian reform generally.

It was necessary in the first place that there should be some central authority in a position to take over the powers of recalcitrant local authorities, and so to ensure a better execution of the law than had so far obtained. But in the second place the introduction of a really new principle was required. It had become evident that mere permission to the County Councils to acquire land was quite ineffective in cases where land monopoly and the resisting-power of the great landowners prevented an agreement. Power of expropriation had become absolutely inevitable. Even this important reform did not suffice to solve the difficulties arising as between the problem of the ownership of land and the problem of the unit of holding. Compulsory purchase could indeed make the acquisition of the necessary soil possible. But the market price of land in England being so much above its capitalised agricultural value, and this price being still further enhanced by the cost of expropriation, it remained doubtful whether the land so acquired could be made to pay in the form of small properties. Compulsory purchase could not abolish the fact that it was often necessary to pay for qualities of the land which were of value to a wealthy landowner, but not to a small cultivator. Hence the third and most important change in the law, the change which more than either of the others expressed the demand for a change in existing conditions as a measure of social reform; in view of the difficulties created by land prices and landownership as they stood, the hope of creating a class which should in the main be a class of peasant proprietors was given up, and compulsory hiring was instituted, with the intention of bringing the creation of small tenant-farmers into the foreground.

If under modern conditions the large farm had remained the most profitable unit of holding, no one would have attempted to limit the right of landowners to the free disposal of their land. For, as Mr G. C. Brodrick remarked as early as 1881, "it is a trite saying that large farms always go with large properties¹." The law of compulsory hiring expresses the fact that the form of landownership created by historical conditions and now existing in England does not correspond to the needs of modern agriculture so far as the unit of holding is concerned: that is to say, that large properties and small holdings cannot go "hand in hand." The recent legislation

¹ Brodrick, *op. cit.* p. 393.

endeavours to modify the harmful conflict of interests thus set up. It leaves to the landlord his property in the land, but it obliges him, where the need arises, to let it in accordance with the modern economic pressure for small holdings. The English landlord may in future still value his land for the sake of the sport it provides, the social consideration it ensures him, or the political opportunities it offers him, and may pay as high a price as he pleases for these qualities of land regarded as a luxury. But its value for these purposes can no longer prevent the increase of small holdings, for if the landlord refuses to meet an existing demand for them, the State will force him to use his land as is most desirable from the economic and socio-political points of view. If in this way a divided ownership of land arises in certain cases, it is because the increasing tendency to regard the land in the first place as a luxury and only in the second place as an instrument of production has made such a divided exercise of the rights of property necessary.

Such considerations are however rather of theoretical than of practical importance. For the compulsory clauses only come into operation where no voluntary agreement can be arrived at; that is to say, in case of necessity. This is a point which has often been overlooked by the opponents of the measure. The *Quarterly Review*, for instance, writes:—"So far as owners of land and other property are concerned, almost any bold measure of socialism would be less harassing and oppressive than the annual crop of semi-socialistic measures which has been the characteristic feature of recent legislation, particularly that of the present government¹." And the writer concludes his annihilating criticism of the new legislation by suggesting that the only really effective method, if any change is to be brought about at all, is to buy out the landowners of the country according to the receipt of Henry George. He thus overlooks the fundamental difference between the existing legislation and any such sweeping measure; the difference which makes the Act of 1907 one of reform and not of revolution. The Act does not undertake any general transformation of the conditions of landownership. In the first place, it only interferes where the creation of small holdings is economically justified; and in the second place it only interferes where the conditions of landownership prevent such a development on non-economic grounds. In contradistinction to the plans of communistic land reformers it refuses to limit in general the rights of property in land; it will only limit them just at the point where

¹ *Quarterly Review*, 1907, p. 222 n.

they oppose a development which is desirable from the purely economic point of view.

The Liberal Party has thus succeeded on the one hand in keeping itself clear from the fantastic proposals for a general nationalisation of the land¹, and on the other hand, unfettered by the antiquated dogmas of an older Liberalism, in opening up the way of progress. The second point is specially worthy of notice. What would the predecessors of the modern Liberals—Cobden, Hume, Bright or Roebuck—have said to State attacks upon landed property as contained in the Act of 1907? They would probably have felt inclined to leave for other countries, where sufficient virtue still remained to stigmatise such proposals as preposterous Socialism, totally unworthy of men who claimed the name of Liberal. But modern English Liberals are not terrified by the idea of property as conceived by their forbears. They aim at forming a programme which shall correspond to the needs of their time, independently of the history of the dogmas of political economy. "Liberty," writes Mr Asquith, "is a term which grows by what it feeds on, and acquires in each generation a new and larger content²." Hence they have created a programme of agrarian reform based not simply on the abolition of entails or on the avoidance of protective tariffs, but aiming at a positive, constructive end, namely at the creation of a new class of small cultivators. Thanks to the English Parliamentary system, under which no Party can afford to be without a programme on any question of living economic importance, the Conservative Party, as has been seen above, has also adopted proposals for the State creation of small holdings. The two Parties are divided only on the question of the means to be used for the purpose. Moreover it is interesting to notice that the original pioneers of the movement, Mr Joseph Chamberlain and Mr Jesse Collings, who were in the eighties regarded as mere dreamers³ when they contemplated the possibility of compulsory purchase, are now able to advocate the same measure with a peaceful conscience from the bosom of the Conservative Party. For compulsory purchase is now a Conservative method, as contrasted with the compulsory hiring advocated by modern Radical reformers. So adaptable are political opinions in a country where political parties on the whole compete, not to represent the special interests of some particular class, but to serve the general interests

¹ As represented by the Land Restoration League and Land Nationalisation Society.

² Samuel, *op. cit.* p. ix.

³ Cp. Sir E. Colebrooke, *Small Holdings*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1886, p. 17.

of the national economy, regarding its claims as more pressing than those of special interests or party dogma.

(b) *The working of the Act of 1907.*

Such being the provisions, and such the aims, of the Act of 1907, the question naturally arises as to the degree in which it has so far justified its existence. It is however obviously difficult to give a satisfactory answer, in view of the short time for which the Act has as yet been in operation, viz. only since January 1, 1908. In the two years 1908 and 1909, 60,889 acres were acquired by the County Councils for the purposes of the Act, of which 34,234 were purchased and 26,655 were taken on lease¹. As compared with the results of earlier legislation these figures appear very satisfactory and full of promise for the future. It is true that up to the end of the year 1909 the whole of the area had not yet been apportioned to small cultivators. The actual process of home colonisation takes place slowly, and in many cases the figures given above represent contracts, either of sale or lease, which did not come into force till after 1909. But it is certainly a remarkable fact that by December 31, 1909, 2793 small holdings had been created by the County Councils, representing an area of 36,845 acres. Only 28 acres had been acquired by their occupiers by way of purchase².

The provision for expropriation contained in the new Act has also been used to a considerable extent. Altogether 169 Compulsory Orders have been laid before the Board of Agriculture in the first two years of the Act's existence; 59 of these have been "for the compulsory purchase of 7676 acres," and 110 "for the compulsory hiring of 4670 acres." By the end of 1909, 79 of these Orders had received the sanction of the Board. A still more important point is that in the case of compulsory hiring the Board, through its employment of an arbitrator or valuer, has obtained land at a considerably lower price than had originally been asked for it. In one case land for which the vendor had demanded £28,967 was compulsorily acquired for £23,485. In another, about £48 rent had been demanded for a farm of some 19 acres, and this was reduced by the valuer to £34³. On the other hand the County Council concerned had in almost all such cases to pay more than it had originally offered. As a rule the

¹ *Annual Report on Small Holdings*, Pt. 1, 1910 (Cd. 5180), p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

price set by the arbitrator practically split the difference between the price or rent asked by the vendor and the price or rent offered by the Council.

The state of affairs does not look quite so satisfactory when the number of applications for holdings is compared with the number actually created. In 1909 the County Councils received 3157 applications for land which altogether amounted to 54,572 acres. But of these applications only 1770 were approved, for an area of 26,611 acres¹. Conclusions by no means favourable to the practicability of the Act have often been drawn from these facts, and more especially from particular cases where applications have been refused. In many circles and among many politicians the view predominates that the administration of the Act is not being adequately carried out, and that its success is in this way being imperilled. A not unimportant movement has in the course of 1909 taken shape in the Land Club League², an organisation whose aim is avowedly to improve and accelerate the working of the Small Holdings Act. At a meeting of the League on March 4, 1909, complaints were heard from various quarters to the effect that County Councils had refused many perfectly justifiable applications, and had shown altogether too much tenderness for the interests of the landlords and holders of sporting rights, while the Board of Agriculture had often remained inactive, so that the law, excellent in itself, could only succeed in meeting a fraction of the real demand³. The Board of Agriculture seems itself to be conscious that some such view is widely held: for its latest *Report* (1910) contains the following significant remark:—"We think that in the great majority (*sic*) of cases there is no justification whatever for the view that hostility or apathy exists on the part of those responsible for the administration of the Act⁴." In spite of this denial, the impression remains that the Small Holdings Commissioners are attempting to defend themselves against complaints of which they are very clearly conscious.

It would certainly be unjust to complain of the administrators of the Act simply because they have refused certain applications for land. Undoubtedly it is in many cases difficult, and even impossible, at once to meet the demand for small holdings. Undoubtedly too in

¹ *Annual Report on Small Holdings*, Pt. 1, 1910, p. 24.

² See *The Land Club Movement*, a descriptive pamphlet issued by the Land Club League, and ed. 1910.

³ See the League's periodical, *Our Land and Land Club News*, Feb. 1910, pp. 9-11.

⁴ *Annual Report on Small Holdings*, 1910, p. 18.

other cases either technical agricultural conditions in the particular district, or the personal qualifications (or absence of qualification) of the applicants, make it undesirable to provide such holdings, if not altogether, at any rate immediately. But on the other hand hindrances certainly do occur in numerous instances which are not based on such material or economic circumstances. Since the interests of the landlords, land-agents and large farmers are strongly represented on the County Councils and the Small Holdings Committees appointed by them, while the small men get very little representation, it is unquestionably the case that the dislike of those classes of the community for small holdings may prove a very serious difficulty in the way of the effective administration of the Small Holdings Act. On the other hand the past two years have clearly shown that where a few active and energetic men take up the question, there small holdings rapidly increase. Cambridgeshire, for instance, stands before all other counties for the number of its newly created holdings: a result which is admittedly due to the energy and talent for organisation of the Chairman of the Small Holdings and Allotments Committee, Mr E. O. Fordham¹, who has entirely devoted himself to the service of the movement. But in general it would certainly seem desirable that the Board of Agriculture should exercise its powers where the County Council refuses to act, and that if these powers are not yet sufficient they should be further enlarged.

The Act of 1907 would undoubtedly be in evil case if the central authority should prove negligent. The two first Commissioners, Mr E. J. Cheney and Mr M. T. Baines, have worked hard to increase the number of small holdings. Their reply to the pessimism of certain sceptics or opponents is most encouraging:—"It is commonly supposed," they say, "that small holdings can only succeed in certain localities, where the soil is particularly good and where there are special facilities for the profitable marketing of the produce. But as a matter of fact the conditions which make for success are much more widespread than might be at first imagined²." But on the other hand it is a matter of common knowledge that the Board of Agriculture contains very influential men who are naturally prejudiced in favour of the landlords and the large farmers of the older agriculture, and are not merely sceptical about, but actually opposed to, the new movement. These men do not change when the

¹ *Report of a Conference as to the Administration of the Small Holdings Act, 1908* pp. 6 ff. and 31-33.

² *Annual Report on Small Holdings, 1910*, p. 18.

Government changes; and although the permanent Civil Service of England is not supposed to represent any particular political party, it is unavoidable that its private opinions should to some extent influence its administrative functions, so that the line of action adopted receives a distinct political bias where personal initiative is required, or where personal influence comes into question. A Minister cannot get away from the influence of his politically opposed subordinates, unless he is a man of quite unusual energy and capacity.

Here again, therefore, political considerations make themselves felt in regard to a purely economic question. And unfortunately it seems as if the Liberal reform had rendered the political friction in the small holdings movement more acute than before. For the Conservative Party continues to hold fast by the ideal of the peasant proprietor¹, and defends its ideal nominally on economic grounds, whereas in reality it is determined by the dislike of landlords for compulsory hiring, the "three Fs," and limitations upon the rights of property. The consequence is that the small holdings question is increasingly side-tracked out of its proper lines of economic discussion, to become the plaything of political programmes. "The small holdings problem," as Mrs Wilkins writes², "has been dragged into the arena of party politics; the battle is raging round the questions of ownership and tenancy." However the struggle may end, its mere existence must be fatal to the chances of any well-considered policy of home colonisation.

State action, however, as has already been indicated, has by no means been the only method by which the multiplication of small holdings has been attempted. Along with State action has gone a great deal of effort in the same direction set in motion by private initiative. All such effort has depended more or less upon the co-operative principle. Agricultural co-operative associations were to be called into existence for the purpose of acquiring and cutting up properties. Of these, the associations formed by Mr R. Winfrey are perhaps the best examples. Mr Winfrey first founded a Small Holdings Syndicate³ in the neighbourhood of Spalding in Lincoln-

¹ A Small Ownership Committee has been formed under the presidency of Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., to which very prominent Conservatives belong, its object being to further the creation of small properties. As the best defence of this point of view the reader should consult Sir Gilbert Parker's book, *The Land for the People*, with a preface by the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, M.P., 1909.

² Mrs Wilkins (Miss L. Jebb), *The Small Holdings Controversy*, 1909. Mrs Wilkins here expounds clearly and instructively England's need of a class of tenant farmers.

³ *Report of the Co-operative Alliance Congress*, 1902, pp. 343, 345, 349.

shire, where he was able to rent holdings from Lord Carrington, who is strongly in favour of the modern revolution in methods of holding. By 1904 the syndicate held 650 acres let to 200 tenants. Mr Winfrey came to the conclusion that considering the price of land and the general conditions of landownership the small man did best to rent and not to buy his holding¹. He only bought land even for the associations when he found it impossible to obtain it on lease, as in the case of his second foundation, the Norfolk Small Holdings Association, which held 339 acres in 1904. Another similar undertaking, in which Sir James Blyth and Mr J. H. Whitley took part, was the Small Holdings Association of Newdigate in Surrey. This association devoted itself to the creation of small properties, the area to be from 3 to 25 acres. The purchaser had to pay down ten per cent. of the price, and then paid half-yearly instalments of capital and interest, the rate of interest being five per cent., and the total capital being paid off in ten to fifteen years². Such co-operative procedure has considerable advantages over either self-help or State effort in the matter of the creation of peasant properties of larger or smaller extent. An area of two or three hundred acres can be bought cheaper than a single holding: and indeed many landlords who may be willing to sell a good-sized slice of their property would not consent to alienate a farm here and another there. As against the local authority, these private associations have the advantage of being able to carry out the necessary preliminary works, such as the erection of buildings, fencing, drainage and so forth, at a much cheaper rate than a public body³. It is a further advantage when these associations take from the beginning a genuinely co-operative form, and bind their members to common buying and marketing of goods. Nevertheless it seems doubtful whether the fundamental difficulty of the cost of land can be overcome even by co-operative purchase and other co-operative or quasi-co-operative methods. According to the prospectus of the Surrey Association, their land, though said to be bought well below the market-price, cost £20—£30 an acre. Whether small men, unable to save a great deal, and not having any profitable by-employment, can pay such a price seems very problematic. It appears likely that such associations will mainly benefit small shop-keepers, industrial

¹ Cp. also the views of another keen supporter of small farming, W. L. Charleton, in *Small Holdings and Co-operation*, Newark, 1901, p. 10.

² Other similar associations were the Aylestone Co-operative Allotments Society Ltd. in Leicestershire, and the Land Association Ltd. in Nottinghamshire, the latter being pronouncedly co-operative in character.

³ Bear, *A Study etc.*, p. 86.

workers, little capitalists and so forth ; that is to say, the class which is prepared to pay something for the non-economic advantages of landed property. The experience of Lord Wantage's Land Company, for example, was that this class was the first to make use of such opportunities¹, rather than the small holders and agricultural labourers for whom they were intended.

The Act of 1907, however, strongly favoured the formation of Agricultural Co-operative Associations (cp. s. 9); and accordingly new results are to be recorded since the date of its coming into force. In 1909 fifteen Small Holdings Societies or similar associations of a co-operative character hired land, amounting to 1893 acres, under the Act. And the Small Holdings Commissioners wrote in their most recent Report that "the experience of the last two years has strengthened our conviction that the method of establishing [such holdings] with the best prospect of success is to acquire an area of land and to let it to a properly constituted Co-operative Association under section 9 of the Act²."

It is necessary nevertheless to beware of ascribing such an extension of small holdings as has yet been achieved either to voluntary reforming zeal or to the Small Holdings Acts. Neither has been in any sense a main cause of the progress shown by the statistics. Even so far as they have been effective, it has not been because their aim was socially justified, but because it was economically possible. For more than a century similar efforts had been made without any success worth mentioning. That legislation and association for these ends was even possible was due to economic conditions. Up to 1880 the champions of the small holdings system had the economic tendency of the time against them; the more recent agricultural developments have been very much in their favour. Since then also dates the small but perceptible result achieved. If the branches of agriculture which form the proper domain of the small farmer were still unprofitable, all attempts artificially to create small holdings would be as unsuccessful as ever. Indeed, the importance of market conditions and choice of employment to the small holder are generally recognized. Thus the Surrey Association carefully chose for its holdings grass-land of the first quality, as being specially suited for the purposes of both stock-farmers and fruit-growers: i.e. it

¹ Shaw Lefevre, *op. cit.* pp. 254 ff.

² *Annual Report on Small Holdings*, 1910, p. 14. Permission to let land to such an Association has to be given by the Board of Agriculture, which has laid down rules on the subject, widely distributed by the Agricultural Organisation Society.

recognized that the profitableness of those branches of agriculture was a fundamental condition of the success of small holdings. Many theorists deduce from these facts the proposition that all such socio-political action is quite unnecessary; that the economic tendency will make its own way. Mr Kebbel, for instance, says :—"The number of small farms seems to me to have declined with the extension of arable land. May it not be that their revival will be a natural consequence of the restoration of this land to grass? I think this is worth waiting for; and that any legislation would be premature till the probable extent of the change which is already in progress can be first calculated¹." But it would be, to say the least, one-sided to regard these State and voluntary efforts from so fatalistic a standpoint: and this because the question of the unit of holding is only in part an economic question. If the course of its development were simply dependent on economic or capitalist conditions, it would be quite correct to say with Mr Kebbel that the increasing profitableness of pasture-farming and market-gardening would bring about a rapid change in the size of farms without any interference by the State or by social reformers. But though the fundamental economic conditions are favourable to the rapid extension of the small holdings system, non-economic forces are making in the contrary direction: and against these the conscious attempt to revive the system on the ground of its social advantages may be a very effective weapon.

¹ Kebbel, *op. cit.* p. 160.

CHAPTER IX

THE RESPECTIVE ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF THE LARGE AND SMALL HOLDING

INTRODUCTORY

IN the preceding chapters the recent evolution of the system of agricultural holdings in England has been sketched. It was seen to be characterised by a diminution in the number of large and very large farms and an increase of small and medium-sized and also of allotment holdings. This tendency to diminish the area of the unit of holding has been shown to be due to the changes in the conditions of sale and production since 1879, the decreasing profitableness of corn-growing and the increasing profitableness of stock-feeding, dairying, fruit and vegetable culture, etc. These latter branches of production prove to belong, on the whole, to the domain of the small farmer, who on the other hand only undertakes corn-growing as an altogether secondary matter: so that the change in the relative profitableness of the various branches of production necessarily favoured the small as opposed to the large holding. It remains to consider why the various units of holding are particularly fitted for certain branches of production: why one kind of product belongs to the domain of large farming, and another to the domain of small farming or *petite culture*. The answer to these questions will throw much light on the connection between the current conditions under which production and marketing are carried on in any country and the system of agricultural holdings adopted. The problem is, what are the economic laws which govern the relation between a particular branch of agriculture and a particular type of holding? Thus stated, it appears as a compromise between the two theories on the question of the unit of holding which were defended by earlier students of agricultural economy. One set defended the large farm and another the small farm: some were convinced that the former was the one

desirable type of holding ; others, with equal conviction, declared for the latter. The actual historical development in England has proved both sides to be mistaken ; the champions of the small farm were contradicted by the facts of 1760 to 1880, their opponents by more recent developments. Their common error was in discussing the question of holdings apart from any reference to the uses which they might serve. They aimed at discovering perfectly general advantages and disadvantages of this or that type of farm, and so determining the type which at all times and for all purposes was absolutely the best. It is true that some such general advantages and disadvantages do exist, irrespective of the particular branch of agriculture pursued. But history has proved that the economic superiority of one type over another is mainly dependent on their respective relative advantages in regard of certain kinds of product. The large farm, for instance, flourished when the price of corn was high and failed to maintain itself when the price fell. Moreover many of the particular superiorities adduced as absolutely valid were really only valid in regard of some special branch of production. The large farmers of the eighteenth century were undoubtedly better educated than the peasant holders : but whereas this was held to be a general advantage of the large farm system, it was really only of importance where arable farming made demands upon the intelligence of the agriculturist in order that the new scientific and technical discoveries might be applied. The lack of such intelligence was of no great importance on, say, a small dairy farm, which depended mainly on the intensive personal activity of the occupier. Again, the great advantage which the large arable farmer had in the purchase and use of labour-saving machinery was indeed significant so far as concerned the competition between large and small arable farmers, but not for any comparison between large arable farms and, say, small pasture farms, where such machinery was either not needed at all, or at any rate was not a conspicuous item in determining the profitableness of the holding. If these mistakes of the old—and indeed of many recent¹—students of the question are to be avoided, the advantages and disadvantages of the various units of holding must be considered separately in regard of the various branches of agriculture. By this method the danger of ascribing general importance to relative advantages will be avoided. Such a discussion must of course be limited to the chief points in each case, all secondary matters being dismissed as briefly as possible.

¹ See my review of Dr Eduard David's book, *Sozialismus und Landwirtschaft*, Vol. 1, Berlin, 1903, in *Deutschland*, November 1903, pp. 191 ff.

When the good and bad qualities of the various types in regard of the various products, or the special qualities of each unit of holding, have been established, it will remain to consider what general qualities may be ascribed to each; qualities, that is to say, which belong to a particular type of holding whatever use it may serve. The cost of buildings is always higher per given area under small farming than under large, for example, and this is a disadvantage of small holdings which has nothing to do with any question of the branch of production pursued: for the cost of buildings varies very little whether a farm is devoted to corn or to vegetables. The influence of these general advantages or disadvantages on the competition between the various units must therefore be estimated, as also their effect in weakening or strengthening any special qualities of a unit. These special qualities, however, will first be dealt with.

A. IN RELATION TO THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF AGRICULTURE.

(a) *Corn-Production.*

Small farms have proved profitable in recent times, but, as has been shown, they are still not as a rule devoted to corn-growing, which remains the prerogative of the large farm. Small farms which did grow corn felt the crisis severely, and their occupiers apparently suffered even more than the larger holders under the depression. The question is therefore as to the causes of the superiority of large farming in regard of corn-production.

It will be remembered that Arthur Young laid much emphasis on the relative cost of ploughing on large and small farms, and the point seems still to be one of great importance. The expense of purchasing horses obviously falls very heavily on the small agriculturist. In addition, he is not as a rule in a position to make full use of these expensive animals when he has bought them. Mr C. S. Read stated that to give full employment to two horses an arable holding must cover at least 40 acres¹. Small holders, if they keep horses, are consequently obliged as a rule to find some by-employment for them². Often they send them to work on the holdings of other small farmers when they are not using them themselves. Others undertake carrying work in addition to their farm work, and so make use of their horses

¹ Read, *op. cit.* p. 8.

² See e.g. *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 2647-2648.

in their spare time; or they may take passengers to and from market¹, or into the neighbouring towns, covering by this by-employment what they lose through their incapacity to give full employment to their beasts. But such by-employments can only be undertaken by allotment holders, and not by the small farmer, whose holding will claim the whole time of himself and his family. And even allotment holders cannot be sure of fully compensating themselves in this way for the necessary expenditure on their horses. In districts where small holdings are common, for instance, there is no sufficient demand for this superfluous horse-power. In such cases the small agriculturist tries if possible not to keep a horse at all. He gets his ploughing done by some neighbouring farmer. A large farmer will often do this for him at cost-price. But naturally he has to wait until his neighbour has done his own work, with the result, very often, that his holding is ploughed in wet weather and sown at the wrong time². A small farmer³ holding 40 acres told the present writer that he had at one time eight acres of arable, but had given this up, because the necessary horses cost too much in view of his rent. Small patches of arable could only pay, he said, if the farmer had other work for the horses on the roads. The case is altered, of course, when the horses are not required in the first place for plough-work, but for carrying the produce of the holding to market, perhaps daily, or several times a week. In such cases it will pay the farmer to keep one or two horses: ploughing will be a mere by-employment for them, their chief work being the carrying business. Thus in giving evidence on the small holders of Shropshire Mr W. H. Lander stated that they kept horses for the purpose of carrying poultry to market and of taking passengers, and also used them in the actual farm-work. "If he has to hire a horse to plough his ground of course that alters the question altogether, for if he has to pay for horse labour it would very soon take away all the profit⁴." On the other hand, as the area of the holding increases the relative number of horses required decreases. The small arable farmer holding 20 acres needs as many horses as one holding 40 acres, for, as has been seen, not till the latter area is reached can two horses find full employment. An arable farm of 80 acres, under ordinary circumstances, will not require more than four horses; while one of 160 acres will only require six⁵. Statistics

¹ E.g. *Report* of 1894, qu. 33, 310.

² *Read*, op. cit. p. 9.

³ Mr Ackland, of Long Bennington, near Newark, Notts.

⁴ *Report* of 1894, qu. 33, 298 ff.

⁵ According to Mr Davis of Pensaxt and Mr Selby of Epworth (Lincolnshire). Mr Rider

show this relative decrease of horses kept as the holding grows, though it must be remembered that the statistics showing the number of horses on the various units of holding refer to holdings of all kinds, pasture as well as arable: and also that the number of horses kept does not depend simply on the requirements of the plough, but on various other circumstances, especially in the case of small holdings. Taking the first point into consideration it is evident that the number of horses per 100 acres on small arable holdings must be much larger than would appear from the figures given below: for the holdings enumerated must include thousands of small pasture farms on which no horses at all were kept. But the second consideration mentioned makes in the other direction, since if all horses not kept for ploughing purposes were deducted there would be a great diminution of numbers, especially in the case of the smaller holdings. Only within these limits can the figures be used to show that arable farming on a small scale entails a greater relative expense for horses than on a large scale. The following table gives the percentage of arable land in the total area under consideration, as well as the number of horses kept per 100 acres.

<i>Class of Holding</i>	<i>Percentage of Arable land</i>	<i>Horses kept per 100 acres (1885)</i>
1—5 acres	26·87	7·4
5—20 „	24·70	5·6
20—50 „	33·31	5·3
50—100 „	42·48	4·9
100—300 „	47·92	4·3
300—500 „	53·09	3·8
500—1000 „	58·06	2·3
over 1000 „	53·90	2·6

Thus while the percentage of arable land increases in the larger holdings, the number of horses kept per acre decreases considerably. Even under the limitations indicated above, the result shows clearly that fewer horses are needed for large than for small arable holdings. It appears that while on holdings of 1 to 5 acres, about 29 horses are kept per 100 acres of arable, holdings of 5 to 25 acres have about 22, but holdings of over 1000 acres not more than 5. It is clear that the main proposition is established, though the difference would not be so extraordinarily great if it were possible to take the necessary limitations into calculation.

Haggard also gives some instructive figures (in op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 190 f.) as to the horses kept on 14 holdings in Epworth. According to these, holdings of 20, 25 and 30 acres keep two horses, while holdings of 50, 80 and even 100 acres only keep three.

A second advantage possessed by the large over the small arable farmer is the cheaper use of labour-saving machinery. The steam-plough is a machine which is quite out of the question on a small holding, since a large area is absolutely necessary if it is to be used profitably. However, this is not a point of much importance, nor has it had much effect in the competition between large and small farms in recent times. The steam-plough has not fulfilled the hopes which were once set upon it¹. It is now only used in England on holdings having very large cornfields: nothing is heard of that general use of it which was justifiably expected about 1870.

The steam threshing-machine, on the contrary, has found much more extensive application. Middlemen keep such machines and hire them out to farmers who cannot afford to buy them or whom it would not pay to keep one for themselves. Not only allotment holders and small farmers take advantage of this system, but also the occupiers of middle-sized holdings. Large farmers, on the other hand, almost always have their own. It pays them to buy a threshing-machine because they can almost always use the engine for other purposes. A certain Kentish farmer², for instance, has bought a crushing-mill for the purpose of making the steam-engine belonging to his threshing-machine useful. This steam-driven machine produces all the food-stuffs which he needs for his numerous cattle; and as he uses his own raw material he is sure of having them of the best quality and unadulterated. Such a machine costs £25. A straw-chopper is often driven by the same engine which is used for the threshing-machine, and sometimes actually at the same time³. The small farmer cannot put an engine to use in such ways, because he has not the capital to buy the various machines. Even the occupier of a medium-sized holding cannot afford to do so, as a general rule. And as the corn to be threshed by men of these classes is not sufficient to make it worth while to buy an engine for this alone, they find it much better to hire their threshing-machines as required. But by this method they pay more for threshing than their larger neighbours, who can make full use of a machine and soon pay off its cost. Also it must be remembered that the transport of the threshing-machine from farm to

¹ See e.g. W. J. Malden, *Recent Changes in Farm Practices*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1896, p. 29:—"Steam cultivation, which twenty years ago bade fair to become more general, has receded in popularity, and the advantage which was expected to result from it has not been realised."

² Mr Douglas, of Fish Hall Farm, Tonbridge.

³ *Stephens' Book of the Farm*, 4th ed., Edinburgh, 1891, Vol. 1, pp. 449, 454.

farm is expensive, and has to be paid for by the hirer. Farmers who hire their machines, too, are tied down to certain days, whereas the farmer who has his own has it at his disposal at any day or hour. In consequence of these difficulties small holders are often obliged to resort to hand threshing-machines. The latter thresh about 10—25 bushels an hour, whereas the steam-engine threshes 48—65 bushels.

Nor is the case of other machines used in arable farming more favourable to the small man. For example, almost every farmer has a drilling machine. It costs £28 to £30, or on a farm of 30 acres about £1 an acre. The same machine can do the work needed on a farm of 300 to 400 acres, when the cost will be only about 1s. 6d. per acre¹. Then there are winnowing machines, corn fans, straw elevators, sowing machines, the very widely used reaping machines and the reaper and binder. All these are found almost exclusively on the large arable farms. The small farmer cannot afford to buy them, and these particular machines are not to be hired. Unless he can borrow them from a large farmer he has to do without them; that is to say to carry on his farm without the aid of the modern improvements in technique.

A few words will suffice as to the qualities of the various types of holding in relation to the cultivation of green and root crops, a matter which only comes into consideration here in so far as such crops play an important part on farms devoted to corn-growing. Where they are only grown for the purpose of feeding the stock on the particular farm, their production is not, of course, to be regarded as a branch of agriculture pursued for its own sake. Here the question is as to their production concomitantly with corn-production and for the market, that is to say, generally speaking, simply as an item in the system of rotation adopted on large arable farms. Large farming appears to have the same advantages in the case of these crops as in corn-growing. All that has been said as to the lower cost of ploughing naturally applies to them also. Nor is there any essential difference between the two kinds of crops as regards the application of machinery. Turnips, in particular, require a great deal of machinery if cultivated scientifically. And even if the small farmer can get the use of the machines, he still cannot obtain the same results as the large farmer. To obtain a good turnip-crop it is necessary, among other things, that the very complicated process of sowing and manuring should be carried

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 7492 (evidence of the Secretary of the Farmer's Club, Mr Druce).

through as far as possible without interruption. Various stages intervene between the opening of the furrows by the drill-plough and the final sowing of the seed. On a large farm with plenty of horses and a well-developed division of labour they can be made to follow at once one upon another, or even carried on side by side: and this is a great technical advantage¹. Again, for all these crops plentiful and well-applied manure is important: and here again the large farmer, comparatively strong in capital, has the advantage. He can use a manure-spreading machine, which lays the manure evenly and without waste over the fields. Such a machine costs £18 or £19², and it would therefore be too expensive for the small holder. Another disadvantage which hampers the small man considerably, both in regard of corn-growing and of green crops, is the unfavourable position in which he stands when buying either seed or chemical manures. The large farmer gets cheaper rates and better goods because he buys on a large scale. The small farmer often has to put up with poor and adulterated goods.

The many qualities in which the large arable farm is superior to the small are thus evident. The small farmer, on his side, has hardly anything to set against them so long as he remains an arable farmer. No doubt, working himself with his family, he gets his labour cheaper than his rival, as even the occupier of a medium-sized holding does very often. But the saving so made is far from compensating for the large farmer's command of labour-saving machinery. And what is even more important, the labour of the occupier and his family has here no peculiar qualitative value. Corn-growing depends on relatively simple mechanical processes, and makes no special demands on the interest and industry of the labourer. It allows of, and even demands, more than any other branch of agriculture, division of labour as between the manager and the operative, the head and the hand. It can be admirably carried out by wage-labour, supervised and directed by the occupier or by a farm-bailiff. So far as the large farmer does take a personal share in the work, it is, as pointed out above, not for the sake of economising labour, but because it puts him in a better position to direct the work of his employees. In corn-growing the qualitative properties of the work of the owner play a very small part; and thus the small farmer has nothing to compensate for the various advantages of large scale production in this particular branch of agriculture.

¹ Stephens, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 348.

² See the catalogue of the firm of Sergeant, Northampton.

(b) Vegetable and Fruit-growing.

In English agriculture the most important vegetable and fruit crops are as follows: of vegetables, cabbage, cauliflowers, brussels sprouts, carrots, celery, beans, peas, tomatoes, cucumbers and potatoes; of fruits, (1) orchard fruits, apples, pears, plums, apricots and cherries, and (2) garden fruits, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries and currants.

As to the cost of cultivation, the first noticeable point is that the great difficulty of the small corn-growing farmer, namely the disproportionate expense of the necessary horses, disappears. In fruit and vegetable culture the horses employed are not as a rule needed simply for ploughing, but chiefly for the purpose of carrying the goods to market. The produce must be carried into the town or village at least on market days. Fruit and vegetables are not sold in great quantities and at a certain time, but as they ripen from day to day: and a horse and cart are therefore necessary even on such holdings as send their goods by rail to the larger centres, unless they lie in the closest possible proximity to the station. Accordingly the small holder has employment for a horse in his own business, for other purposes than the actual cultivation of the soil: and in fact on the smallest holdings the main use of the horse is for transport purposes. This is especially the case where a little grower has customers in the neighbourhood, and takes fresh fruit and vegetables to them almost daily.

Where a small holding is in the immediate neighbourhood of the market or of a railway station no horse may be needed for transport. But in such cases the use of a horse for cultivating the soil is also often unnecessary. In these favourably situated holdings, if not larger than 1—5 acres, the plough can be replaced by the spade. Spade-culture is suitable almost solely for fruit and vegetable-growing. The relative cheapness of the product makes it economically impossible in the case of corn. It would not pay to cultivate a corn-field of four or five acres with the spade, even though the gross produce might be increased. But the higher price obtainable for fruit and vegetables might make the use of the spade worth while. On the other hand spade-labour is much too expensive to be used on larger areas, even when devoted to these crops. The excellent results it gives are therefore a distinct prerogative of the smallest holdings. The little holder, helped by his family and working longer and harder than a hired

labourer, finds spade-culture much less expensive than would the occupier of a larger holding. To the latter the cost is prohibitive¹.

The question of machinery does not enter into this sphere except so far as potato-growing, a subject to be considered below, is concerned; so that the large farmer gains nothing from his capacity for acquiring expensive machines. In regard of these crops human labour is the essential matter, and more particularly those qualities of human labour which can least be replaced by mechanical means. Fruit and vegetable crops thrive best where every individual plant, bush, tree or fruit has received the greatest amount of individual care and attention. Standardised treatment, such as is possible in the case of corn, is out of the question here. The constant watchfulness of the labourer and a loving attention to every detail are what is needed². In other words, a different kind of labour is required for this branch of agriculture, namely work of a qualitative intensity. Ploughing, harrowing, drilling, sowing, reaping and so on are processes which allow of more or less mechanical activity on the part of the worker. But in setting plants, cutting cabbages, choosing out ripe fruit or properly grown vegetables, picking and packing soft fruit, etc., care and intelligence are indispensable. The treatment of fruit-trees and the successful cultivation of garden-fruit also make great demands on the attention of the worker. But the less mechanical work there is to be done, the less suitable is hired labour. "Fruit-growing and market-gardening would not be so prosperous were it not for the attention given to the crops by the excellent and hardworking cultivators of Evesham and district," says the *Journal* of the Royal Agricultural Society³. Personal interest is the only force strong enough to call out the care, attention and painstaking exactness required for *petit culture*. It is not enough for this personal interest to be directed to the mere organisation of work which is to be mechanically carried out by other men's labour, as in corn-growing; it must be concentrated on the actual labour itself. The greater the share of the work taken by the occupier and his family, the better will the conditions be fulfilled which are essential to success. This explains why this branch of agriculture is proper to small holdings; the personal labour of the occupier can naturally only be applied over a limited area.

Accordingly it is found to be the general rule in England, that the larger farmers, who undertake corn-growing and pasture-farming,

¹ R. Scott Burn, *Systematic Small Farming*, 1886, pp. 159 f.

² James Long, *A Handbook etc.*, pp. 129, 131.

³ *Journal R. A. S.*, 1908, p. 104.

produce scarcely any fruit or vegetables for the market. On the other hand there are holdings, and whole districts of such holdings, entirely devoted either to fruit or vegetables or to both together; and in these districts some large holdings will be found. The present writer saw a market-garden of 600 acres in Lincolnshire, almost entirely under vegetable crops. A hundred acres were devoted to celery¹. Mr Bear mentions two brothers in Kent who hold 1000 acres almost exclusively devoted to strawberries and currants². But market-gardens on such a scale are exceptional. They often have extensive forcing houses, the use of which has very much increased of late years in England. Such houses naturally require a considerable expenditure of capital, and are therefore out of the reach of the small man. But this is not the chief reason for the existence of these very large fruit or vegetable farms alongside of the smaller gardens. Mr Bear, who has given much attention to the development of hot-house culture, considers that its importance in the competition between large and small holdings is less than that of the advantage in marketing possessed by the large holder³. Two methods of sale must be distinguished. The gardener may himself sell his produce in his own neighbourhood; or he may sell it through a middleman in some market either near or distant, either selling outright to the trader or giving him some sort of commission on the sale. The latter method is generally in use when the goods are sent by rail to a market at some distance: and in this case the small holder is at a great disadvantage as compared with his larger competitor. In the first place the railway tariff⁴ is almost always so arranged that the relative cost of transport diminishes with the amount to be carried. Consequently the man who can send the greatest quantity has proportionately least to pay. In the second place, the large grower, selling wholesale, can as a rule make much better bargains with the trader than the small holder can⁵. In the large grower the middleman meets a man accustomed to business transactions; in the small

¹ Mr Blaides' holding, Epworth, Lincolnshire.

² W E. Bear, in *Journal R. A. S.*, Vol. IX, Part I (1899), pp. 14 f.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. X, Part II (1900), p. 44.

⁴ See the figures given by Sir Francis Channing, *op. cit.* pp. 268 ff. They show that the so-called "reduced tariffs" always begin at a certain minimum quantity only, and that this minimum is often set very high. Consequently those who have less to send than this minimum are at a great disadvantage. Cp. also Bear, *A Study etc.*, p. 20.

⁵ Eyre, *op. cit.* p. 6:—"I have heard very various reports as to the prices obtained, which, on the whole, go to prove that the man who deals in small quantities always gets less than the man who can send large supplies."

man he finds an inexperienced agriculturist, with whom he can have his own way. These circumstances have probably contributed to the custom by which the large growers almost always produce for the great central markets, whereas the small holder—i.e. in this case the man with 3 to 8 acres—only supplies the neighbouring district, unless he happens to be close to some great centre. But this state of things has not so far proved injurious to the small holders. Often they get from their private customers, or selling retail in their own shop or “stand,” better prices than the large growers selling wholesale to the dealers¹. Indeed, the price of fruit and vegetables often rules higher in the neighbourhood of the producing districts than it does in the great markets, where it is often rapidly depressed by the quantity of goods sent in². In the year 1903, for instance, the great markets, such as London, were glutted with celery, while in the neighbourhood where it is chiefly produced, namely the Isle of Axholme, there was a positive dearth of it³. Such occasions naturally profit the small holder who does not work for the central markets, whereas the large holder suffers under the depressed prices there. The very small gardeners, holding $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 acres, and keeping neither cart nor horse, sell in their own immediate neighbourhoods, as do the allotment holders, who have often produce for sale even from a holding of $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an acre only, if their family does not happen to be large⁴. They sell either to large farmers, or to artisans, or small shopkeepers, inn-keepers, etc. Such a market is ruled more by custom than by any other factor, and the sellers can generally dispose of their wares to their satisfaction.

Thus the inability of the small and very small holders to reach the central markets, and their limitation to the local market, is certainly a disadvantage to them arising from the competition of the large growers. It is desirable that all markets should be open to all goods. But still this disadvantage has not so far seriously injured the small market-gardeners. The markets which are open to

¹ Bear, *A Study etc.*, p. 57:—“In the course of my investigations I met with many examples of the advantage to small fruit-growers of selling their own produce, either to consumers or to stall-keepers, shop-keepers, or hawkers. In most of the great towns of the midland and the northern counties there are large fruit and vegetable markets, in which growers have stalls, attended by their wives or other members of their families, who sell at retail prices. In one instance a small grower said he had realised 12s. a bushel for his apples, while a large one, who sold at wholesale prices, had averaged only 4s.”

² Long, *op. cit.* p. 133.

³ So the present writer was informed by Mr Blaides of Epworth.

⁴ Onslow, *op. cit.* pp. 49 f.

them often suit them better than those which the large grower supplies. Methods by which they might command all markets will be discussed below.

It is often said that the large, capitalist grower can manure his land better, and therefore obtain a larger gross product, than the small man. The premise may be correct, but the conclusion is not so. For the small holders can make up for the disadvantage of a somewhat less intensive manuring by the use of spade-labour, an advantage, as already pointed out, peculiar to the small grower of fruit and vegetables.

Thus neither the advantages arising from a larger disposable capital, such as the provision of forcing-houses or of better manuring, nor those in regard of marketing, can produce a decided superiority of large over small holdings in the growing of fruit and vegetables. The large holdings lack as a rule the essential condition for the profitable pursuit of this branch of agriculture, namely the intensive application of labour. The small fruit-growers in the Evesham and similar districts are said to be at work by three in the morning in the height of the season. Of the small holders in Devonshire a correspondent of Mr Read wrote:—"The farmer himself with his eldest boys works harder, and many more hours, than a paid labourer does nowadays¹." Such industry results from the keen interest of the men in their own holdings, and the returns they look for not simply in money, but in the establishment of their independence. The work they do is not only quantitatively more than, but qualitatively different from, anything which the large holder can obtain by investment of capital or hiring additional labour: and this qualitative intensity is precisely what is above all demanded by market-gardening. Hence the small holder has always one great advantage over the large grower².

Potato-growing, as already mentioned, is an exception; but it is an exception which proves the rule. Where potatoes are grown for the market, and are the first or even the second object of the grower, the large holding appears to be the most suitable unit. Like corn-growing, potato-growing depends on simple processes which can be carried out mechanically. The importance of individual attention is

¹ Read, *op. cit.* p. 22.

² Mr C. Whitehead, Agricultural Adviser to the Board of Agriculture, also came to the conclusion that fruit-growing "is specially suited to the cultivators of small holdings," owing, as he says, to the fact that "fruit, as well as vegetable production, is an engrossing occupation, requiring immediate and personal attention, which a small cultivator would delight to give." See Long, *op. cit.* pp. 135, 131.

small as compared with the importance of an abundant application of capital. Machinery, which in regard of other vegetables is practically useless, comes into play again here, especially in potato-harvest. The potato-digger, with three horses, can work three or four acres a day where the field is large enough, and the necessary assistants are at hand to gather the potatoes, and "on most large holdings the potato-digger is therefore called into use," says *The Book of the Farm*¹. On a small holding not more than two to two and a half acres can be dug in a day, according to the same authority. Other machines too, effecting an enormous saving of labour, are only applicable on large holdings. On one such in Hertfordshire², with 100 acres under potatoes, the present writer saw in use a potato-setting machine which did in one day, with one man, work that would otherwise have taken three men four days, and did it much more regularly. The same farmer had also a potato-sifter which sifted ten tons a day, employing four men, whereas the old sieve, attended by two men, disposed of one ton a day only.

In potato-growing, therefore, the quantitative intensity of the labour of the small holder and his family can hardly compensate for the absence of machinery: the qualitative intensity of such labour is not needed for the mechanical processes to be performed. Potatoes also require a great amount of chemical and natural manure, which the large farmer is in a better position to obtain than the small. Spade-work, which compensates for this disadvantage in the case of other vegetables, is not so profitable in potato-culture, owing to the relatively low value of the product. The allotment holder, growing for his own use or to sell in very small quantities, may make use of spade-labour. But the holder of 3, 4 or 5 acres, desirous of making potatoes his chief crop, will hardly find spade-work pay. If he has to use the plough, the difficulty of finding other employment for his horses arises. Potatoes are not marketed in small quantities, but are harvested all at one time and sold wholesale. Unless the small holder grows other vegetables, or fruit, in addition to his potatoes, he will hardly be able to make full use of his beasts. His case is the same as that of the small corn-grower.

When market-gardening is said to offer special advantages to the small holder, therefore, potato-growing, unless in combination with other crops, must be excepted. Where potato-growing by itself, and

¹ Stephens, op. cit. Vol. III, p. 118.

² Mr Muir's farm, Burston Manor, Park Street, Herts.

for the market, is concerned, large and medium holdings are superior to the small farm. But this superiority is obviously due to the fact that the technique of potato-growing is altogether different from that which makes the other branches of vegetable-growing a suitable sphere for the small holding and the small agriculturist.

(c) *Stock-farming.*

Stock-farming is a title which includes very various branches of agriculture. Breeding, rearing young cattle, fattening, dairying, sheep-farming, pig-keeping, poultry-keeping and the breeding of pedigree or herd-book stock may all be included under this head, although there are very great differences between them as regarded from the point of view of the holding economically suited to each.

(1) *Cattle-breeding.* In the first place the breeding and fattening of cattle and sheep may be considered: and here it is necessary to draw a distinction between farms which are mainly arable, and grow their own feeding-stuffs and straw, and those which are mainly pasture, and buy what other natural or artificial foodstuffs, etc. they may need. As has been seen above, until the abolition of the corn-laws stock-farming was quite subordinate to corn-growing as an object of English agriculture. Corn and the three-field system were characteristic of the average farm. The rotation of crops did not become general until the rise of meat-prices after 1846, when it served both to make corn-growing more profitable, and to enable the farmer to keep a much larger number of cattle. Between 1850 and 1880 corn-growing and stock-farming were combined, in such a way that on arable farms corn-growing did indeed keep the first place, but nevertheless the production of meat was regarded as of nearly equal importance. In more recent times it has come to be the chief object. The corn, where any is grown at all, is often simply grown for the benefit of the cattle, and not as an independent branch of production. On many arable farms of 150—300 acres it is only grown to provide winter food and straw, the farmer preferring to produce these for himself. On smaller holdings this is naturally still more markedly the case¹. But arable land being proportionately more expensive on small holdings

¹ W. J. Malden, *Recent Changes in Farm Practices*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1896, pp. 31 f. :—"Farmers have consumed more of their own produce on the farm, when circumstances have permitted. There is a decided advantage in thus consuming home-grown grain, as the in and out profits to the middleman, where grain is sold and cake is purchased, are saved."

than on large, it is evident that so far as regards stock-farming on arable farms the large farmer has a considerable advantage over the small. He ploughs more cheaply, and can afford to use labour-saving machinery, and so gets his straw and winter fodder at less cost. He feeds his stock, therefore, more cheaply than the small holder. This is true of sheep-feeding as well as of cattle-farming. Where the farm does not include great sheep-walks or large areas of pasture, sheep-feeding can only properly be carried on by means of turnip and clover fields to be fed off by the flock: and this, as already explained, the large farmer can arrange more cheaply than the small. As regards root-crops which are not fed off on the field itself, as e.g. mangolds, the small farmer has indeed the advantage of harvesting them by means of cheaper labour: but this does not compensate for his loss at the time of ploughing. These considerations do not apply where sheep-breeding is conducted on pasture-farms. But here too the large farmer has the advantage. He can take the so-called "sheep-walks"—wide stretches of poor grass-land, often mountainous. To succeed on these, a man must have large flocks of sheep, which the small farmer has not the capital to obtain. Cut into small areas such farms would never pay¹. The cost of the necessary fencing alone would be too heavy as compared with the value of the land. Therefore the use of such pastures, which are often excellent for the purpose, remains a prerogative of the large farmer².

As regards cattle-breeding on arable farms, the large farmer has other advantages besides those already mentioned. A small holder can often grow only part of the foodstuffs necessary, and is therefore obliged to buy. The large farmer, on the contrary, often buys only if he can on the one hand get what he wants at a low price, and on the other sell his corn dear. In Westmorland, for instance, I was told³ that farmers fed their oats to their own beasts, or sold them, according as the price of maize and oilcake was high or low. So that the large farmer is less dependent on variations in the price of foodstuffs than the small. Again, the large farmer can obtain the expensive artificial foods at a relatively low price, while the small farmer, as a rule, finds them altogether too costly⁴.

¹ This is admitted even by enthusiastic supporters of the small holding system. Cp. J. L. Green, *Allotments and Small Holdings*, 1896, p. 89:—"It would be absurd to cut up a large hill sheep farm, for instance, which is practically fit for nothing else but sheep feeding and breeding." Also Sir M. Hicks Beach in the *Report of 1894*, qu. 6058.

² Walker, *Small Farming*, in *Journal of the Bath etc. Society*, 1902, p. 85.

³ By Lord Brougham's agent on his Eamont Bridge estate (Westmorland).

⁴ *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 7481 (Mr Druce).

When pasture-farming is in question, the large farmer has still great advantages as regards the purchase of foodstuffs, which, whether natural or artificial, are very necessary on such farms. And here again he has the use of machinery, as e.g. grass-cutting and hay-making machines, which the small man cannot generally afford. Even if a small farmer does make up his mind to provide himself with them (for allotment holders, even of the larger type, it is of course out of the question) he has to pay at a higher rate for a machine of smaller capacity¹. Kelsey's Patent Chaff Cutter and Sifter, for instance, cost in 1904 :—

<i>To treat per hour</i>	<i>Price</i>
12 cwts.	£37
16 "	£43
20 "	£52. 10s.
24 "	£58
30 "	£62

So that the farmer who bought the most expensive machine did not pay nearly double what the cheapest cost, whereas his machine, though only about 67 per cent. dearer, was of 150 per cent. higher capacity. The large farmer, therefore, saves both time and labour through being in a position to buy and make full use of a better machine than his small rival can do. Here again he has an advantage in pasture-farming over the small holder.

The invention of hay-making machinery has been particularly important to the large farmer. Without it he would be at a considerable disadvantage in this part of his business. The small farmer, in consequence of the more intensive labour (here quantitatively intensive) which he applies, can get through his hay-making much more quickly than the large farmer employing day-labour. Consequently he can often take advantage of favourable weather, and finish his harvest before bad weather sets in, while the large farmer takes longer about the work, and can seldom get in all his hay before a break in the weather occurs. To employ extra labour at a time when its price is high is a doubtful benefit. But the use of labour-saving machinery solves his difficulties. It does not indeed give him any superiority over the small holder in this sphere, but it does put him on the same level. In the result, the large pasture farmer, though the use of machinery helps him greatly, does not obtain by its means

¹ See the catalogue of Kelsey and Co., Sheffield, p. 13.

such a decided advantage over the small farmer as the large arable farmer does in his branch of farming. The use of machinery is among the points which make the large farm distinctly superior to the small for arable purposes. For pasture-farming it can only lessen the disadvantage at which the large farmer stands, especially in hay-harvest.

Small farming has one specific advantage which is of the greatest importance in stock-farming, and even outweighs all the advantages which have been mentioned on the side of the large farmer. These advantages have all been concerned with processes only indirectly affecting the ultimate object in view, namely the beasts themselves. The actual work among the cattle has not yet been discussed. This is however the most important part of the whole business; and it is just here that the small holder has an advantage so great as to make him master of the situation in many cases. In no other agricultural employment is so much individual attention and personal interest, that is to say such qualitative intensity of labour, needful. Careless or even rough handling of the animals may do very serious harm. Cows in calf or at the period of calving, young calves, sick or weakly beasts, all need most careful attention. So does the cleaning of the sheds and stalls, and many other matters essential to good cattle-farming. To all these things the small holder attends personally. He, with his small stock, is not obliged, like the owner of a great herd, to leave the handling of his beasts to the uninterested hands of the hired labourer, contenting himself with the supervision which naturally cannot be everywhere at once. The modern small holder is not behind his predecessor of the eighteenth century in his love for his beasts and the sacrifices he is willing to make for them. No detail escapes him, and the interest he has in them, and the pride with which he regards them, make him hesitate at no amount of labour which may improve their condition. A very able Gloucestershire landlord¹ told the present writer that he thought small holdings best suited for calf-rearing; and that he let the hilly district which he owned in Shropshire to small farmers, as being appropriate for the purpose. In fact, in this sphere small farming seems to have a clear advantage over large, in consequence of the qualitatively intensive labour it demands. The same advantage applies to some extent to the fattening of cattle; but it is not here of such pre-eminent importance, so that the small holding cannot be said to be absolutely superior to the large

¹ Mr Granville E. Lloyd-Baker, of Hardwicke Court, Gloucester.

for this purpose. The qualitative intensity of labour which it affords here rather serves to compensate for the advantages possessed by the large farmer in other directions: so that the two types of holding are practically on an equality.

(2) *Dairying*. The great prerogative of the small holding, namely the personal work of the occupier and his family, is nowhere of such great importance as in that branch of stock-farming which plays a leading part in modern English agriculture, namely dairying. The small holder is at a great advantage in butter and cheese-making and in the sale of milk and cream, and very largely as a result of his superiority in the fundamental matter of milking. English agriculture is, as has been said, suffering under a very serious exodus from the land. The labourers who remain not only take advantage of their position to demand higher wages than heretofore, but they make more demands of all kinds; they are more cultivated and more fastidious—results which from the point of view of civilisation in general are certainly desirable. Women's labour has very much diminished, and in many districts has ceased altogether¹. The high wages earned by the men enable them to keep their wives (and also their children up to a certain age) at home, instead of sending them out as formerly to wage-labour for an outside employer. Moreover, under modern conditions the wives and daughters of agricultural labourers can often find very paying employment on their own allotments. But this impossibility of commanding women's labour is a serious difficulty for the employer, and more especially for the dairy-farmer. The larger farmers, whose families do not take part in the work of the farm, have been obliged to give up women milkers altogether: but they have not found that men are equally satisfactory in that capacity. This is a complaint which may be heard whenever a large farmer is encountered. The owner of a great steam dairy and of a large dairy-farm in Devonshire² told the present writer that he gave his labourers 16s. a week, with a free cottage and garden, on condition that they undertook to send their wives to do the milking daily. But few farmers are in a position to make such a stipulation. Most of them have to face the dislike of the women for wage-labour, and to put up with men as milkers. But even men are difficult to get. The younger labourers hate milking. They regard it as work to be despised.

¹ Wilson Fox, *Agricultural Wages*, pp. 297 ff.

² Mr Loram, the owner of the Cathedral Dairy at Exeter.

They specially dislike all Sunday work, such as is of course required on a dairy-farm¹. They want to have their Sundays free for enjoyment and for their best clothes, and not to be obliged to be at the cow-sheds at certain hours to milk or feed the cows. Nor is it the Sunday work only, but the kind of work involved in dairying, which makes them object to service on a dairy-farm. A Yorkshire labourer² told me that both he and others had found that the younger men liked attending to horses, but not to cattle. The work was dirty, and in the evening the intolerable milking, with the accompanying dirty boots, came all over again. The older men, he said, had enjoyed looking after the cows, but the younger ones preferred any other kind of work. Such being the case, it is not wonderful that loud complaints are heard that the milking is done carelessly, lazily and dirtily. Such complaints come not only from large employers, but also from scientific students of English dairying methods³. "Cultivate the acquaintance of your cows, treat them kindly, and teach them to regard you as their best friend; cows love kind treatment, and we may rest assured that it will pay," says Professor Thonger⁴ with undoubted truth. But his words prove the necessity that the handling and care of the cows should be done by their owner. "Friendly" treatment is not to be expected from wage-labourers. If a farmer succeeds in finding men to do the hated milking, no doubt with suppressed ill-will, he has to be constantly on the watch lest their dislike of the work should find expression in some careless or unkind handling of the beasts, and so injure their health and the quality of their milk⁵. Nothing but the lively interest taken by the occupier and his family can produce the loving attention needed for the work. Agriculturists are to be found all over the country who have given up their dairies at the moment when it became impossible for members of their families themselves to do the work, whether because the wife became an invalid, or because the daughter married, or from whatever other cause. They preferred (and especially is this the case with the tenants of medium-sized farms) to turn to other branches of agriculture rather than to employ outside labour in the cow-sheds when home labour failed. But the large farmer is from the very beginning subject

¹ *Report on the Earnings of Agricultural Labourers, 1900*, p. 54.

² Mr William Johnson, High Farm, Brandsby, Yorkshire.

³ Sheldon, *The Farm and the Dairy*, p. 71. Cp. also what is said on this point in the *Estate Book, 1906*, p. 278.

⁴ C. G. Freer Thonger, *Some Essentials of Successful Dairying*, in the *Journal of the Bath etc. Society, 1903*, p. 82.

⁵ Burn, *op. cit.* p. 320.

to this serious difficulty if he wishes to take up dairy-farming. He must pay very high wages, and even then not obtain anything like the work which he admires in the small holder and his family, and which is the fundamental condition of success in this direction.

Nor is it only in the actual milking that the qualitative intensity of the work of the small holder and his family is so essential. The same demand is made by the other work of the dairy, and especially by butter and cheese-making. Professor Sheldon points out that it is desirable in the interests of cleanliness that the maid who does the churning should also undertake the milking. But this is only possible, as he says, in a small dairy. On a larger farm the most she can do is to supervise the milking so as to see that it is done with as much regard to cleanliness as possible. It is above all things necessary that she should have a real sense of responsibility. "Herein lies the reason why farmers' wives are, as a rule, the best dairymaids—they feel the responsibility, and take a pride and an interest in their work," as the Professor puts it¹. The same thing is seen in the case of cheese-making, and especially in the classic country of English cheese-making, namely Cheshire². The best economic results are produced where no outside labour is employed, but the cheese is made by the farmer and his wife themselves. It is their personal interest in the work which leads the small holders positively to enjoy those details which the hired labourer regards as most irksome: and which produces effort of a qualitative intensity which wage-labour can never attain, but which is very necessary in the branches of production in question.

The large holding has, it is true, some advantages over the small even in this sphere; such as slightly, though only slightly, to lessen the superiority of the latter. In the production of milk the large farmer has only one thing in his favour; namely, a lower cost of transport. The small holder, owning from one to six cows, is at a great disadvantage in regard of the marketing of his milk: so much so that it is often the large farmer only who supplies the great central markets. The case is the same as with the transport of fruit and vegetables. Most railway companies have tariffs for the transport of milk with rates diminishing as the quantity sent increases. Thus to send anything up to 12 gallons from Westmorland to certain districts costs 1s., while every further gallon costs 1d. only. Taking the average yield per cow per day as 1½ gallons, the owner of six cows will have to pay 1s. per day for the transport of his milk. But the owner of twelve cows will

¹ Sheldon, *The Farm and the Dairy*, p. 72.

² Brodrick, *op. cit.* p. 397.

only have to pay 1s. 3d. This grading of the tariff results from the simple fact that the railway companies can transport large quantities at a relatively lower cost than small. The result is the same as with the market-gardeners. Part of the milk market is closed to the small holders. The same is true of butter for similar reasons. But, again as in the case of the market-gardens, this fact is often no real injury to the small holder. The small allotment holders, living in the village, often sell their milk to customers who themselves take their jugful home, so that no question of cost of transport arises. Or the producer may send his children out with the milk, and may find plenty of customers, at any rate in the summer, among visitors from the towns, excursionists, etc. These methods of sale do not concern the large farmer at all, as he never sells in such small quantities¹. The butter of the allotment holder may be disposed of in similar ways. The larger allotment holders and the small holders proper have moreover a real advantage in this sphere, in the way in which they are able to sell to their own special customers in the neighbouring towns or villages. Even Mr Read, who is in general an advocate of large holdings, and fails to estimate the advantages possessed by the small holder at their real value, is obliged to admit that "in its distribution (i.e. the distribution of butter, etc.) the wife of the small farmer, if a good market-woman, can generally make a considerable profit²." Naturally the small farmer often fails, through negligence or laziness, to make use of all the advantages which he has at his disposal. But some of them, at any rate, take the pains to carry their own butter into the town, and get from their customers throughout the year 3d., 4d. or 5d. above the market price. They did not, according to their own account³, feel the fall of butter-prices in the nineties as the large farmers, dependent on the wholesale prices or indeed on the prices of the world market, did. Thus while the small butter-makers are to a great extent excluded from the wholesale market by the competition of their larger rivals, they have a retail trade of their own, resulting from their peculiar methods of work, which cannot be touched by the large farmers. The qualitative intensity of the labour of the small holder is here shown not in production, but in distribution. The large agriculturist can only sell in gross and make his agreements *en bloc*. The small man takes the trouble to sell in small quantities to customers with special tastes, and so often gets the highest prices.

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 1370 (Mr Pell).

² Read, *op. cit.* pp. 10 f.

³ *Report of 1894*, qu. 939 and 940.

No doubt, however, it is desirable for the small producers that they should be able to reach the central markets, especially in cases where they have no secure and profitable sale in their own neighbourhood. The best way of opening up such markets to them will be considered below.

The large and medium-sized dairy-farms have another great advantage in the labour-saving machinery of which they can make use. Indeed it might be said that but for this it would be impossible for the larger holders to compete at all with the small in this particular sphere. Even so, no satisfactory machine has yet been invented for the most difficult and most characteristic part of the work, namely milking: and in this particular the superiority of the small holder remains undiminished. But for other purposes there are very useful machines which, on account of their cost, can only be applied on the larger farms. The large farmer, too, is not merely in many cases the only one in a position to pay the price of such machinery; he also gets it at the lowest price. For example, one of the most important accessories of the modern dairy, the separator, is priced as follows for its various numbers¹:—

No.	Gallons separated per hour	For farms keeping	Price
1	9	1—3 cows	£5. 12s.
2	27	4—10 "	£9. 12s.
3	45	11—18 "	£13. 2s.
4	55	19—25 "	£17. 2s.
5	65	26—30 "	£21. 5s.
6	100	30—50 "	£26. 17s.

The owner of 30—50 cows will therefore provide himself with a separator dealing with 11 times as much milk per hour as that bought by the small holder owing only 1—3 cows. But for this machine with a capacity 11 times that of the other he will pay only five times the price paid by the small man. The case is similar with the Pasteurising machines², the price of which is such as to be quite prohibitive to the smaller holders. Here the question is as to competition between medium and large farmers. With the cooling apparatus³, too, the large man is at an advantage as compared with the small. Churning-machines are sufficiently low in price to be at the disposal of the small holder. But here again he has to pay

¹ Cp. *Catalogue of Dairy Machinery Appliances*, published by the Dairy Supply Co. Ltd., London, 1903, pp. 9—11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

relatively more than his larger rival. A churn to work two gallons of milk per hour costs £2. 15s., while one with a capacity 12 times as great costs only £8. 10s.¹ Thus it is by no means correct to say, as Dr. David has said², that there is no question of competition between large and small farms in the matter of machinery, because the machines are at the disposal of the latter as well as the former. The initial cost of the machines, and especially of the machines of greatest capacity, is relatively lower for the large farmer; and their use is therefore cheaper for him. It is of course quite another question whether the use of machinery is of such great importance in dairy-farming as to result in an absolute superiority of the large to the small holding. This does not seem to be the case. So long as no satisfactory milking-machine can be found, the small holder has the advantage, not only in the sale of fresh milk, but also in the production of dairy-products, the cheaper and better milking being of fundamental importance. As regards marketing, the two types of dairy-farm are fairly on an equality. As regards labour, machinery does not play such a rôle, whether in butter or cheese-making, as does cheap and good hand-labour, in which the small holder always has the advantage. The machines can to some extent compensate the large farmer for his weakness as compared with the small farmer: they do not, as in the case of corn-growing, increase his superiority. A dairy-farmer producing on a large scale, selling wholesale, and using machinery, has few advantages and very important disadvantages as compared with a small farmer who does the work himself with the aid of his family, sells his products in person (or through his wife) and employs little or no outside labour. The division of labour itself, which elsewhere, as e.g. in corn-growing, is so profitable, is on the large dairy-farm often simply a necessary evil. The reader will remember, for example, that it is said on high authority to be desirable that milking and butter-making should be undertaken by one and the same person.

No fact goes further to prove the superiority of the small holding for dairy purposes than the remarkable custom which exists in some parts of the country under the name of sub-letting the dairy³. That is to say, that the large farmers sub-let small dairy-farms out of their own holdings. They supply all the stock, including the cottage and the cows. The small sub-tenant does the work himself, with his family, and pays the large farmer a certain rent per annum—

¹ *Catalogue of Dairy Machinery Appliances*, p. 47.

² David, *op. cit.* p. 691.

³ See e.g. Colebrooke, *op. cit.* p. 50.

in Devonshire about £13 per cow. The large farmer also has the calves: and the remainder of the profit goes to the sub-tenant.

(3) *Pig-keeping.* The next two branches of stock-farming to come under consideration are pig-keeping and poultry-keeping. Both are among those branches of agriculture which at the time of the high corn-prices were regarded as "trifles," and which nevertheless are playing a part of increasing importance at the present day. In the case of pig-keeping the small holder has many advantages as compared with the large. In the first place, the household waste, with some of the garden produce, is usually sufficient to feed a few pigs, in addition to what they can pick up in the fields or elsewhere. The large farmer, keeping a large number of pigs, finds his household refuse go less far among them: so that as a rule his pigs cost more to keep than the small holder's. As Professor A. W. Shaw puts it, "pig-keeping to the small farmer is the portion of his business which, considering the return, monopolises the least capital¹." Another point in favour of the small pig-keeper is, once again, the peculiar intensiveness of the labour of the small agriculturist. As Mr Burn has pointed out in his instructive book, cleanliness in the keeping of the animals is of primary importance if pig-keeping is to be profitable. The reason for the complaints of its unprofitableness so often heard is precisely that this fundamental condition is not fulfilled². The large farmer would need to pay more for this purpose than is worth his while in view of the relatively low price he obtains for the beasts: and indeed under modern conditions he would find it difficult to get labourers to undertake this "dirty work" with the necessary care. The small holder with his personal labour and personal interest has here again a decisive advantage.

(4) *Poultry-keeping.* Poultry-keeping like dairy-farming, only in a greater degree, is a branch of agriculture which makes more demands on the farmer's wife than on himself³. The first question in regard of it therefore is whether the wife of the occupier is prepared to take part in the work of the farm, not merely with her head, but with her hands. The wife of the large farmer (the "fine lady" of an eighteenth century *brochure*) will only undertake the care of poultry so far as they are destined for home consumption. She does not keep them for market. But the personal care of the owner (or in this case of his wife) is an indispensable condition of a flourishing poultry-yard. The

¹ Long, *op. cit.* p. 90.

² Burn, *op. cit.* p. 358.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

individual birds need attention; the henroost must be clean; feeding must be regular and the food clean and properly prepared; and all this needs a loving carefulness not to be expected from wage-labourers or hired servants. It is beyond dispute that the wife of the large farmer is not inclined to devote such intensive labour to the purpose¹. It was quite characteristic that a farmer should tell the Commission of 1894 that poultry-keeping would not be worth his while, since he would have to pay some one to do the work². Poultry will only pay where the farmer's wife and daughters will themselves look after them. Another advantage of the small holder is that, as is often said in England today, a small flock of poultry lays better than a large one. "Six hens," writes Mr Read, "will generally lay more eggs per fowl than a dozen, and a dozen than a score³." So Mr Lawry writes⁴ that a small flock on a small area will do better than the large farmer's flock, which is always given a wide range. An incidental advantage of the smaller area is that fewer eggs will be lost than where the hens can wander over a large field or fields. To provide impenetrable hedges, or even wire fences, over a large area is too heavy a task to be undertaken on an ordinary farm, so that the hens easily get into places where they are not intended to be. Still, the main advantage of the small holder is here again the intensiveness of his labour and his heightened interest in the work. The consequence of the conditions indicated is that large farmers seldom manage poultry-keeping profitably. "Whenever large poultry-farms have been started in England, as, for instance, at Bromley in Kent, they have failed," says an expert, writing in 1891⁵.

(5) *Pedigree Stock-breeding.* One other branch of stock-farming remains to be considered: viz. the breeding of pedigree or herd-book stock. Here, in contradistinction to all the other branches, the large farmer has almost a monopoly. It is not wonderful that this should be the case. The purchase of such stock demands a considerable capital; the prices sometimes obtained have already been mentioned. No small holder can hope to provide himself with a pedigree bull or registered ram. Then besides the initial cost the breeder has to provide expensive foods, exquisite stabling, and the transport of animals to

¹ Cp. a defender of the large farm in this sphere; Read, *op. cit.* p. 12.

² *Report of 1894*, qu. 16,976-16,978.

³ Read, *op. cit.* p. 11.

⁴ J. W. Lawry, *Small Holdings in Cornwall*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1892, pp. 391 f.

⁵ W. B. Tegetmeier, *Farm Poultry*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1891, p. 68.

exhibitions and competitions, and a variety of other items, all necessitating the command of a large capital. On the other hand undoubtedly personal care, personal judgment and attention to details are required. But if these are often wanting in the employee of the large farmer, it is nevertheless true that this branch of production can be pursued by them, while want of capital absolutely prohibits the small holder from undertaking it. The breeding of pedigree stock is accordingly the economic privilege of the large holdings of England.

Summarising the conclusions of this section, it may be said that there are very few departments of stock-farming in which the large holding is superior to the small. There are cases in which their chances are practically equal. In others the small holding has a decided economic advantage over the large. This is especially so in the rearing of young cattle, in the sale and manufacture of dairy-products, in pig- and poultry-keeping. The main reason for this advantage is that these branches of agriculture demand as a fundamental condition of success that qualitative intensity of labour which is only to be found where the occupier and his family themselves do the work of the farm. In this lies the great advantage possessed by the small holder, and in these branches of stock-farming it suffices to throw into the shade any advantages on the side of the large farmer.

(d) *Summary and Conclusions.*

The economic advantages of the various types of holding in regard of the main branches of agricultural production have now been considered. Large and small holdings have been the terms chiefly employed: the medium-sized holding has received less attention. This is because the economic characteristics of the various units can best be understood by a study of the extremes. The medium-sized holding has much in common with the large holding, and much in common also with the small. In some departments therefore it will have advantages as compared with the large holding and disadvantages as compared with the small, while in others the reverse will be the case. For example, if a medium-sized corn-growing farm, or on the other hand a medium-sized dairy-farm, is in question, it is only necessary to apply the laws discovered in regard of the relation of these particular branches of production to holdings of the two extreme types, and the position of the middle type will become evident. Instead, therefore, of tracing out in detail the particular

advantages of the medium holding, it will be better briefly to summarise the general results obtained.

It has been shown that the large holding is absolutely superior to the small in regard of corn-growing and mixed husbandry, and in the breeding of pedigree stock ; that in potato-growing it has the advantage, while in stock-feeding it is on an equality with the small holding. The reason in each case is that all these branches of agriculture demand in the first place intensive application of capital. That is in the foreground, while the need for labour of a special quality and an individualised nature falls into the background, these employments permitting of reduction to a series of mechanical processes and the substitution of machinery for hand-labour. This is not to say, however, that the individualised attention would not be desirable even in these large-scale businesses, as for example in pedigree stock-breeding. The point is simply that this desirability shrinks into insignificance as compared with the absolute need for a free expenditure of capital. Small holdings, on the other hand, excel in fruit and vegetable growing, in poultry-breeding and in stock-farming generally with the exceptions noted above. In the fattening of stock, large and small holdings are fairly balanced. The question as to whether the feeding is on an arable or on a pasture-farm is important, since the small holder is at a considerable disadvantage on the former as compared with the large holder. It follows that the chances of the small farm are at present improving in this sphere, the mixed husbandry of an earlier period having become unprofitable, while stock-feeding as the sole object of an arable holding is much less common than as the object of a holding entirely or almost entirely devoted to pasture. The advantage (or in some cases rather the capacity to compete) on the part of the small holding in these, the most profitable agricultural occupations of the present time, depends on the fact that in these cases the demand for a quantitative and qualitative intensity of labour is greater than that for intensive application of capital. The question is not of mechanical processes, but of matters needing individual attention and of the care of living creatures. The prime condition of success in all these branches of production is therefore qualitative intensity of labour in the highest sense of the phrase ; work in which the heart and mind and individual capacity of the worker, and not some external rule, must be the teacher. Such work has never been obtainable from hirelings at any time ; it has always been characteristic of the head of a concern. Therefore it is that wherever such work becomes of fundamental importance, there the small holder can

at least compete with the large farmer, and in some cases obtains the decisive superiority.

Naturally there is as a rule a combination of various branches of production on a small holding. That which is most natural and economically best is also most usual, viz. a combination of such branches as are individually most suited to the unit of holding in question. Thus large growers of corn and fodder are also frequently breeders of pedigree stock, or growers of potatoes on a large scale, and may at the same time have extensive sheep-walks. As to the combinations found among small holders, they will be best described in the words of Mr Read's Devonshire correspondent:—"The small farmer, with his wife and children in most instances, not only milks and feeds the cows, rears the calves, looks after the poultry and the pigs, but the wife, often also attending to her dairy and butter-making, takes all the produce she can spare from the dairy, poultry, all kinds of vegetables, fruit, and even flowers to market herself; and by these means generally provides the rent by the time it is due¹." These words might well have been written of one of those small farms whose disappearance was so bitterly lamented by the social reformers of the eighteenth century. After decreasing in number for a century or more these little farmsteads seem to be making their appearance again. And whereas the large farm has altered to an extraordinary extent within that period, so far as regards the technique of production, the small holding, centred as it is in the personal labour of the occupier and his family, hardly presents any difference of aspect. Tools, machines, science and technique have all changed, and the general appearance of the large farm, to whose domain they belong, has changed with them. But that most important of all instruments of production, the man himself, has been much less markedly altered²: and therefore the unit of holding which is mainly dependent on the man's own personal work has altered little or not at all in its general characteristics.

Most writers on English agriculture at the present day are clear as to the economic significance of both the large and the small unit of holding. At any rate, the old prejudiced critic who ascribed unconditional superiority to the large farm is now hardly to be found. The prejudice is rather in favour of the small holding. But speaking generally it is recognised that the small holding is in many ways

¹ Read, *op. cit.* p. 22.

² For the sociological aspect of the changes which the small occupier of today has undergone as compared with his predecessor of former days, see Appendix I below.

superior to the large¹. And on the other hand even those who regard the question not from an economic but from a socio-political standpoint have arrived at the conclusion that the superiority of any particular type of holding depends upon the branch of production to be pursued. There are of course plenty of enthusiasts prepared to prove that the small holding is best for all purposes. But intelligent reformers are shaping their views more and more in accordance with the economic laws which have been clearly manifested in the varying circumstances under which agricultural production and distribution have been carried on in the last hundred and fifty years. Even if Mr Jesse Collings—the Nathaniel Kent of the present age—has not yet admitted that the large farm is better suited to corn-production than the small, at all events he has not yet undertaken to prove distinctly what special advantages the small holding would have in that sphere. Like his predecessors of the eighteenth century, all he can succeed in showing is that the small holding is the unit best suited for stock-farming and *petite culture*.

B. GENERAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES.

It appears to follow from what has been said above, that every English landlord, so far as he regards the question solely from an economic point of view, should be a friend and fosterer of small holdings. For it has been shown that with few exceptions precisely those branches of production which belong to the sphere of the small holder

¹ Cp. Lawry, op. cit. p. 391:—"It will be admitted that they (small holdings) are best adapted for dairying, the rearing of cattle, and the production of pork, poultry, and eggs; also for the growth of vegetables, fruit, and flowers, inasmuch as these require a larger amount of skilled labour and personal supervision than the growth of cereals, and the production of mutton, beef and wool." Also W. E. Bear, *The Survival in Farming*, in *Journal R. A. S.*, 1891, pp. 274 f.:—"Large and small holdings have their respective advantages for various purposes and in different localities. In arable districts at least, and so far as the production of the ordinary crops of the farm is concerned, I do not believe that a holding not too extensive to be efficiently superintended by one man can be too large for the most economical results, provided that he has capital enough for his acreage; or that fifty-acre farmers can get a good living by growing corn and keeping a small number of live stock. In favourable situations for marketing milk, butter, fruit, vegetables, eggs and poultry, small farmers who are shrewd and industrious may do well; and cheese-makers on small holdings have always been able to hold their own, if they and their wives were good and skillful managers." Also Brodrick, op. cit. pp. 396, 397, 399-402: and the very instructive evidence given in *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 7351. And finally, see the *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, p. 2, where this point of view is at last officially accepted:—"A profitable farm may be large or small according to the class to which the bulk of the produce, animal or vegetable, to be raised for sale, belongs."

are today most profitable. And it is unquestionable that a landlord who owns small holdings, provided that they are devoted to those branches of agriculture for which they are best suited, is much better satisfied with the economic results obtained by them than by his larger farms. The natural conclusion would seem to be that where the agricultural and market conditions were favourable, the landlord, so far as he was moved by capitalistic considerations, would aim with all his might at the division of his larger farms. But this is by no means universally the case. Many landlords, in spite of the fact that their smaller tenants succeed better than the large, are afraid to proceed to any further formation of small holdings, and that on economic grounds. The explanation is that besides the special advantages which the large holding has in corn-growing etc., and the small holding in stock-farming and market-gardening, there are general qualities of the various units which exist unchanged to whatever use the holdings may be put: and these qualities decrease the profitableness of the small holding at the present day, just as they once increased the profitableness of the large farm.

In the first place comes the question of the cost of buildings. Quite apart from any agricultural conditions, it is always an advantage to the landlord to have few rather than many farm-houses. The throwing together of holdings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant an enormous decrease in expenditure on buildings. The cost of building one new large farm in the place of many cottages was very small. One of the old cottages could be enlarged; or even if it was necessary to build a new house altogether, the expenditure was soon recouped, since the cost of repairs would be much less than on the numerous old small houses. These latter were either allowed to fall to pieces or turned into cottages for the labourers; as a rule the first alternative was followed. This process went on uninterrupted up to the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century. But in proportion as this question of building expenses was favourable to the formation of large farms it is an obstacle to the revival of small farms at the present day. To pull down is easy; to rebuild is much more difficult. Landlords who are inclined to divide their farms feel this acutely. The cost of building has risen greatly of late years in consequence of the rise of industrial wages and the strong organisation of the building trades. A landlord who wants to create small holdings perceives that to do so will involve him in considerable expenditure, since he will have to put up a house, barns and cow-stalls etc. for every tenant. If the old houses were still standing,

it would certainly pay him better to divide the fields and the holdings, and get the consequent higher rents. But he doubts whether those rents would be high enough to compensate him for the capital expenditure he would be obliged to incur as things are. He has further to consider that his expenditure on repairs would necessarily be increased. Under these circumstances he not seldom comes to the conclusion that the profits of the agricultural products proper to the small farm, though greater than those obtainable at present from the large farms, would not be high enough to make such an outlay worth his while¹. It is clear that these considerations did much to prevent the extension of small holdings in the last decade of the nineteenth century². At a time when they were rapidly losing their rents, landlords were not inclined to lay new burdens upon themselves.

Another general advantage of the large farm system, though only general so far as large landed estates are the rule, is that it entails smaller costs of administration than the small farm system. This has been already discussed when the attitude of the land-agent towards small holdings was under consideration. Since the work of administration is much greater where there are many small farms than where there are a few large ones, an estate on which a division of holdings is undertaken will have to be provided with more agents, unless those already employed are able and willing to do the extra work.

¹ Mr Fyffe said before the Committee of 1889 (qu. 6163):—"I do not think that we can solve the small holdings difficulty, that is, the creation of them, by merely expecting that landlords will let enough small holdings. The difficulty of buildings comes in there.... To provide buildings for the small holder is so expensive a matter for the landlord, that practically there are very few cases in which you can have a new small holding made."

² Mr Huskinson said in 1894, as to Nottinghamshire (*Report* of 1894, qu. 765):—"Wherever they (the farms) have been made large by the amalgamation of two or three, there were two or more homesteads, and we have divided them where we possibly could; but, of course, in many cases the house was made for a larger description of farm, and in that case it is impossible to divide it into smaller farms." Mr Jesse Collings said (*Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 765):—"One great reason against the sub-division is the want of money to restore buildings and other appurtenances which have been destroyed by the policy of consolidation which is now found to be a wrong one." A land-agent said (*ibid.* qu. 3783):—"I should be willing to advise the splitting up 10,000 acres of land on two estates in that neighbourhood at once into small holdings, if it were not for the awful consideration of the homesteads and buildings." See also *Report* of 1881, qu. 62,293 and 55,794; *Small Holdings Report*, 1889, qu. 4006, 5096, 6076, 6607, 6364; *Report* of 1894, qu. 6059, 6292, 13,419, 14,371, 34,256, 1700, 3574, 567; also Mr Wilson Fox's *Report* on Lincolnshire, 1895, p. 19. Also *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, *Index*, p. 479, under "Buildings," and especially the evidence given under the head "Finance Question."

Still, too much importance must not be attributed to this point. It is much less essential than the question of building expenses. It is the latter which puts small holdings of all kinds at a real disadvantage as compared with large holdings, and is the main factor in hindering their revival. It is the saving in cost of building and repairs which is the peculiar advantage of the large holding, independent of any question as to the branch of agriculture pursued. Here is the explanation of the fact that though where the small holding has survived it flourishes under modern conditions, the extension of the system is often not economically profitable. The essential question in determining whether or not such an extension will pay is whether the advantage possessed by the small holding in regard of certain branches of agriculture is greater than the disadvantage at which it stands in regard of the cost of building. If it is greater, the formation of small holdings proceeds apace. And the statistics as to the increase of small and medium holdings and the decrease of the largest farms prove that in the majority of cases the advantage is on the side of the small holdings. In proportion as the profitableness of those branches of agriculture which are suited to it increases, the question of cost of buildings and repairs becomes of less importance. And in proportion as those branches of agriculture in which large farming has the advantage, as corn-growing in particular, become less profitable, so does this general advantage lose in practical significance.

But in view of all the circumstances which go to hinder the development of the small farm system, the question whether the various units of holding can in any degree overcome their characteristic weaknesses becomes one of great interest. It remains to enquire whether the large holding can overcome the disadvantage at which it stands in regard of stock-farming and market-gardening, and whether the small holding can get rid of its disabilities in the realm of corn-growing and more particularly in regard of the other branches of agriculture. These questions will be treated below. But it is already evident that if the large farm can in any way overcome its disadvantage in what are today the most profitable agricultural pursuits, it will be the victor in the struggle between the various units of holding. Otherwise, if the small holding can overcome its characteristic agricultural weaknesses, it will have the decided superiority over the large farm in spite of the difficulty created by the cost of buildings.

CHAPTER X

AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION

THERE is no need to waste many words on proving that the characteristic disadvantage of the large holding in the matters of stock-farming, market-gardening and *petite culture* generally is one which no ingenuity can abolish. The personal interest of the occupier doing his own work cannot be supplied by any outside labourer. Moreover, as the rural exodus proceeds, it becomes increasingly difficult to find any labourers to undertake work which is irregular or unpleasant: and therefore the personal work of the occupier becomes increasingly important. The fact that the large farmer is unable to increase the quantitative, and still more the qualitative, intensiveness of the labour applied to his holding is bound to drive him more and more into the background, especially where such increased intensiveness of labour is the essential condition of the profitableness of the undertaking. The case is otherwise, of course, where corn-growing still remains profitable, and large and small holdings compete in this branch of production. The question which then arises is whether the small holder can in any way overcome the disadvantage at which he stands.

It has been held that this can be done by means of co-operation. More particularly it has been supposed that small arable farmers might acquire machinery in common, and plough, thresh and so forth in association. In this way a number of small holdings could achieve the same economies as one farmer on a large holding is able to do. Such co-operative association has theoretically much to be said for it; but when the corresponding practice is looked for, English agriculture has little to show. The student naturally enquires why such co-operation did not arise long ago; why between 1760 and 1880, the period when corn-growing flourished, the large farm and not some association of small farms was the predominant form of holding. The enquiry is the more justifiable inasmuch as attempts were not lacking during that period to organise small corn-growing holdings into co-operative associations. The chief of these was perhaps the Assington Agricultural Co-operative Society, founded on

March 25th, 1830. Its originator was a landlord named Gurdon. He was, as he himself has explained¹, favourable to small holders on general humanitarian grounds, and accordingly cut up a farm of 100 acres into four small holdings, to be worked by four farmers in association on the four-field system. The existence of this association is seldom remembered at the present day, and nothing is heard as to its results. Even Mr Rider Haggard was unable to find much to report about it². Another attempt was that of Mr Lawson, also a landlord, who founded a co-operative farm, the Blennerhasset Farm in Baggrow, Essex, on which the labourers had a large share in the profits and where the provision of machines etc. was also on a co-operative basis. But the farm had to be sold in 1871, the tenants being unable to keep their heads above water³. The idea of co-operative corn-growing was thus not wanting; but the results achieved were very small. At the present day no one with any knowledge of English agricultural conditions thinks of starting a co-operative colony of small farmers on economic grounds, in a case where one large farmer with good machinery and relatively few labourers can do the work. In this communistic form (as it may be called) co-operation is very difficult to establish in England, and is particularly inapplicable to corn-growing agriculturists⁴. But although this particular method is not of practical importance, other forms of co-operation might perhaps still be found to protect the small corn-growing farmer from the competition of his larger rival. There still remains the possibility of co-operative purchase, e.g. of threshing-machines, by which the middleman might be ousted, and of other machinery, which might in this way be bought more cheaply; and the same principle might be applied to the purchase of seed etc. All this is undoubtedly possible in theory; but in practice the aspect of affairs is not found to be quite so promising.

¹ See *Journal R. A. S.*, 1863, p. 165.

² Rider Haggard, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 393.

³ W. Lawson, C. D. Hunter and others, *Ten Years of Gentleman Farming, 1875*, pp. 20-22, 41, 71.

⁴ Mr Graham's description seems excellent:—"Visionaries have drawn many fancy pictures of the ideal village community, where every householder will have his plot of earth and the cultivation will be accomplished by co-operation. One would possess a harrow, another a plough, number three a cart, number four and number five each a horse, and so on, and they would manage to get on by a system of borrowing and lending. The dreamers of such fantastic dreams as these know extremely little either of English villagers or English agriculture. It is a regrettable feature of humanity that wherever a few people are gathered together, envy, hatred, backbiting and jealousy exist to an extent unknown in larger communities." P. Anderson Graham, *The Rural Exodus*, 1892, p. 120.

Every form of agricultural co-operation in England meets at the outset with one great difficulty, which is particularly serious in the case of corn-growing farms; namely the want of uniformity in the size of the individual holdings. Anyone who has travelled through the country, and especially through the corn-growing districts in the eastern counties, will have remarked this. In one place there may be a large farm of perhaps 600 acres, and bordering on it a little holding of some 40 acres; then some allotments, or a farm of a medium size, or another large holding, and so the variegated scene goes on. There are hardly any districts given up to small or medium farms on which corn is the chief product. The Isle of Axholme, so often cited, is in this respect an exception, and a very instructive one. For, as has been seen above, the agriculturists of that district are said to possess a great degree of the co-operative spirit. That spirit is not to be found where small holdings lie scattered about among large and middle-sized farms. In fact, it is difficult to see how co-operation is possible for small and medium holders in such a case. If they purchased some machine for their common use, it would be for ever on the road: and even if the middleman's profit was got rid of, the large farmer, working with his own threshing-machine, would still have the advantage owing to economy in transport. As to machinery for use on the fields, it is true that association might put the small holder in a position to use this, whereas he has not sufficient capital to obtain it for himself. But again the advantage remains with the large farmer, whose machinery is applied over wide stretches of contiguous land, where the work is naturally done more economically than on the smaller fields of the scattered small holders. Whether the various corn-growing districts contain small holders enough for co-operative purchase of seed, food-stuffs and manures to be worth their while seems doubtful: and any co-operation of large with small holders in this respect is altogether improbable. As Mr Clare Sewell Read, a well-known large farmer of the east of England, has pointed out, the large farmers of Norfolk have no cause to complain of their opportunities for the purchase of manures, tools, etc. "A large farmer," as he says, "should be his own co-operator¹." In other words, large farmers have no interest in ousting the middleman or reducing his profits; they are in a position to dictate terms, whereas the small man is dictated to. Thus the large corn-growers have no fellowship with their smaller neighbours: and the latter are too scattered for any district organisation. Co-operation by small

¹ In the *Mark Lane Express*, June 8, 1903, p. 721.

corn-growing farmers is thus hardly workable in practice, however possible and desirable it may appear in theory. And even if it were practicable, it would only lessen and not abolish the superiority of the large holding.

More important, however, than the declining business of corn-production are those branches of agriculture whose profitableness is now continually increasing, namely stock-farming and market-gardening. The weakness of the large farm in these spheres cannot be abolished, since the large farmer can never obtain that quantitative and qualitative intensity of labour which is native to the small holder working for himself. The only question is whether the small holder can in any way counteract the advantages, various though not decisive, possessed by the large farmer. Little as co-operation can do for the small corn-grower, it is full of promise for the small holder in these other branches of agriculture. Two facts will suffice to justify this general statement.

In the first place it is since the decay of corn-growing and the great development in these other spheres that agricultural co-operation has really begun in England. The movement cannot be dated back beyond 1901. It is true that individual societies were to be found earlier¹. But their number was very small compared to the growth which has taken place since the systematic activity of the Agricultural Organisation Society began. The object of this society, which is in the main a copy of the Irish organisation created by Sir Horace Plunkett, is precisely to develop co-operative action throughout English agriculture. It owes its origin and effectiveness to the interest taken in it by certain men who have proved their faith in the cause by the energy they have devoted to it and the pecuniary sacrifices they have made for it. At their head stands the well-known agriculturist Mr R. A. Yerburgh, M.P. But the highest recognition is also due to the services of the Secretary of the Society, Mr T. Nugent Harris, who with untiring enthusiasm has achieved success after success in the introduction of co-operative action into agriculture. The A. O. S. has recently received a grant from the Board of Agriculture for its work of furthering co-operation among small holders. It is of course a great centre of propaganda. Its first work was to organise farmers in certain localities into Co-operative Societies, in communication with the Central Society in London. The branch

¹ According to the *Second Annual Report of the Agricultural Organisation Society*, p. 31, there were in 1902 eight Co-operative Societies for the sale of eggs and poultry, six for dairy-products and six Agricultural Societies for Co-operative Purchase.

societies were in the main autonomous, but the Central Society retained certain rights, mostly in regard of organisation, as e.g. the right to interfere in the administration of the daughter association supposing that this were badly managed. The branch societies, on the other hand, received from the centre advice and help in case of difficulty, information on technical questions, suggestions made by means of the circulation of useful pamphlets etc. Even by 1903 the number of branch societies had risen to 63. By the end of 1909 this number had increased to no less than 321, a remarkably satisfactory result of the efforts of the A. O. S.¹ Of these, 132 were societies for the supply of requirements or sale of produce, 134 small holdings or allotments societies, and 30 dairy societies. The remainder served the most miscellaneous purposes.

In the second place, not only have the beginnings of a conscious movement for agricultural co-operation coincided in point of time with the growing profitableness of stock-farming and market-gardening, but it is remarkable that these societies have been formed precisely in the places where such branches of agriculture have so far flourished most. In December 1902, of the 40 branch societies then existing only one, a Norfolk association, lay in what was described above² as District I. The remainder were all in Districts II, III and IV, and in Wales, which of course is rich in pasture-land³. An interesting geographical study, to be seen at the office of the A. O. S. in London, showed on the map of England, by means of little paper disks affixed, the places where daughter societies were to be found. While the disks were practically wanting in the east and south-east, they were numerous in the midlands and west. Thus the development of co-operation coincided not merely in time but in place with the development of stock-farming and the lesser branches of agriculture. The latter are to be included, since the development of the societies was rapid not merely in the pasture-districts of the west, but also in such market-gardening midland counties as Worcester and Warwickshire. It is thus correct to say that the development of co-operation in English agriculture was conditioned by the presence of small stock-farms or market-gardens. The occupiers of such holdings were able and willing to organise in co-operation, while so far such organisation has proved impossible among small arable farmers. It remains to show why this should be the case.

¹ See *Report of the A. O. S.* for the year ending December 31, 1909, p. 2.

² See p. 103 above.

³ See *Second Annual Report of the A. O. S.*, p. 30.

The table given above¹ shows that in the western counties, and in the so-called mixed and purely pasture counties, the size of holdings is much more uniform than in the corn-districts of the east. In District I, of every 100 acres 58.55 were in holdings of 1—300 acres. In District IV, no less than 82.83 in every 100 acres were so held. In other words, the small and medium holdings were more numerous per area, as compared with the large holdings, in the western than in the eastern counties. Such holdings, of 1—300 acres, have a common interest in the co-operative purchase of seed, manures, foodstuffs, dead stock of all kinds, and so forth. For even the medium-sized holdings find themselves at a disadvantage in these matters as compared with large holdings. They are therefore willing to combine with the small and very small holders; and naturally this can be most easily effected where small and medium holdings are most numerous. Further, to all appearance the uniformity in the size of holdings is particularly great in certain districts in the west of England. As contrasted with the eastern counties, there are districts in which whole colonies of small and medium holdings lie together, sometimes of quite recent origin. Thus Worcester, Warwickshire and Devonshire have their market-gardening districts, and Cumberland, Westmorland, Cheshire, Gloucester and Somerset their dairy-districts. Then again there are neighbourhoods devoted to great sheep-walks, and therefore exclusively held in large holdings. These three circumstances, taken together, suffice to explain why co-operation, and especially association for co-operative purchase, has developed first and chiefly in the western part of the country. They are, to recapitulate them briefly, first, that small and medium-sized holdings have a common interest in the purchase of certain goods; secondly, that the greatest number of such holdings is to be found in the west and wherever stock-farming and market-gardening flourish; and thirdly, that in the west such holdings lie less intermixed with the large holdings than they do in the east.

Where such associations have been successfully founded, the small holders have certainly overcome to a considerable extent one great disadvantage of their type of holding as compared with the large farm; namely that of the higher price they must without such co-operation pay to middlemen and contractors for worse goods.

But besides the disadvantage at which the isolated small holder stands in regard of the purchase of the necessary means of production, he is also, it will be remembered, at a disadvantage in the process of

¹ See p. 104.

production itself. In particular, he is unable to make satisfactory use of agricultural machinery. Even if by co-operation he is able to obtain such machinery at a fairly reasonable cost, its necessary expensiveness, especially in the case of the larger machines, will still render its application on a small holding economically impossible. The comparative uniformity in the size of holdings in the western counties would seem to make it not improbable that small and medium holders should co-operate not only in the purchase but also in the use of certain machines, as e.g. the reaper and binder. But so far little has been heard of such procedure. Co-operative use of machinery has however proved easier of attainment where the machines required are not moveable but fixed, as those which serve for butter and cheese-making and for the production of cream. Co-operative steam-dairies enable the small holder to obtain cheaply the benefit of the use of the most perfect cooling-machines, separators, etc. Such dairies can buy the most expensive machines, which, as has been shown, are also the cheapest, and make a profitable use of them; and the small holder who sends his milk thither obtains a share in the economic advantages of large-scale production such as he could never have as an isolated producer. Where such co-operative dairies have been attempted in England they have proved very successful. That at Brandsby (Yorkshire) has increased its profits year by year. It dealt with 4000 gallons of milk per month in the summer, according to my information in 1903, and was provided with the most effective machinery for both cheese and butter-making. Here too it was striking to notice that the whole district could show very few large farms. Those of six or seven hundred acres were altogether unknown; small and medium holdings were the rule. The smallest holding which sent milk to the dairy was one acre in extent; and the largest was not above 250 acres. So that here again comparative uniformity in the size of holdings may have contributed to the success of the co-operative venture. That such dairies are profitable to the small holder is further proved by the success of steam dairies on a non-co-operative basis. These have arisen where agriculturists have had too little initiative to form co-operative associations, and so have to look on while private capitalists exploit the system which might have brought profits to themselves. This is shown by the history of Lord Fitzhardinge's steam-dairy, which was at one time offered to the farmers using it, in the hope that they would make it a co-operative concern. But at that time they refused the offer. Later on the profits on the business were obviously so great that they

would gladly have acquired it. But it was then too late; the owner was no longer willing to sell¹. Mr E. T. Loram, too (the successful owner of the Cathedral steam-dairy at Exeter), told the present writer that the farmers who provided him with milk might themselves have made the growing profits on the business if they had organised. Again, certain dairy-products cannot be produced at all on a small scale, on account of the cost, as e.g. sterilised milk or condensed milk. But the manufacture of these products has greatly increased in England of late years. Unless by means of co-operation, the small and medium holders cannot compete with the capitalist in this sphere. Only by means of co-operation can they get the full profit on their milk instead of selling it at the ordinary price to be re-sold at one much higher. That the profits to be made, where the market conditions are favourable, are very considerable I saw when I visited the co-operative society for the sterilisation of milk founded by Mr W. L. Charleton at Long Bennington, near Newark. This society, in 1903, had twenty members, only one of them being a large farmer. They received for their milk about 4d. per gallon more than they had done before the foundation of the society, and the prices to be obtained for the bottled milk seemed to be steadily improving.

It is thus proved to be possible for the small holder by means of co-operation to overcome not only his disadvantage in the purchase of goods, but also his disadvantage in production. But his difficulties in marketing his products still remain to be considered. Here too co-operation has a part to play. Co-operative sale can often be very effectively combined with co-operative purchase or production; more especially is it often included in the activities of an organisation devoted to the latter purpose, as e.g. in the case of the steam-dairies. It has to abolish two main disabilities of the small holding; in the first place, the impossibility of selling large quantities, and in the second place, the impossibility of guaranteeing uniform quality. Where the small holder has not the command of some local centre of distribution, or some private list of customers, or a stand of his own in some market-place, this double disability makes him inferior to the large farmer, excludes him from the great central markets or delivers him over to the tender mercies of the middleman. Nor does it only put him at a disadvantage in competition with the large farmer at home, as e.g. in the milk trade, but also in competition with those

¹ See Graham, *The Revival of English Agriculture*, pp. 49 f. A similar example is provided by the success of the Wensleydale Pure Milk Society: for which see E. A. Pratt, *The Transition in Agriculture* 1906. pp. 15 f.

foreign producers who are organised for co-operative export¹. If English small holders are to be protected from foreign competition it is of the first importance that co-operative sale, by means of the concentration of the produce at one centre, should be organised. If this were done, the small holders would be able to demand for their now concentrated productions better prices and better transport terms than the owner of sixty or seventy cows, and even large farmers would probably soon find it advisable to join the association. In the case of butter the steam-dairy is already the centre for sales. Much complaint of Danish competition is heard among English butter-makers: and it is not seldom ascribed to the "unfair" railway tariffs, which are said to differentiate in favour of the foreign product. But the reason for this differentiation is simply that the English makers for the most part send small quantities at irregular intervals. Mr Harris, the Secretary of the Agricultural Organisation Society, told me that various railway companies had informed him that they were quite ready to give the English producers the same tariff as they gave the foreigners, if the former could undertake to send similar quantities and with equal regularity. But it is not only in cost of transport that the small sellers would find co-operation useful; they would get much better prices than they are able to get as individuals; better, very likely, than the individual large farmer himself. The association would set such a price on its milk or any part of it as would be most profitable in view of the existing state of the market. It would engage special agents charged with finding the best markets and making the best bargains possible, and such agents would be in a better position to do so than the most influential large farmer. In this way the disadvantage at which the small holder stands in the marketing of his produce could be entirely overcome. Where such attempts have been made they have proved successful. Thus for example Lord Hampden formed an organisation for the purpose of

¹ The evidence of Mr Biddell, a Suffolk farmer, as given in the *Report of 1894* (qu. 39,432), is instructive:—"The complaint is that we cannot make butter to sell in London as the foreign butter is sold, that no merchant in London can secure a supply worth any consideration at all. While each individual farmer makes his own butter he has to sell it in small quantities, and you cannot get it twice alike; the farmers do not make it alike; no merchant in London will come and buy it, so it will have to be sold in a kind of local retail trade; but if we can secure butter factories by having them in certain centres, and the butter companies would send round and fetch the milk, and would apportion the returns according to the milk produced, I think something might be done. A farmer only keeping eight to ten cows cannot profitably send the milk in the morning to a station unless it is quite close by, and therefore that stops the milk trade, and the milk trade is better than the dairying at any time."

collecting milk and dairy produce and sending it to the large towns, which proved very beneficial especially to small holders¹.

Similar advantages are to be expected from organisation on the part of small growers of fruit and vegetables. Their case is very similar to that of the butter-makers. The small gardeners too complain of the preferential tariffs obtained by foreign growers from the railway companies, and the cause is the same, viz. that the English growers can neither send large quantities nor keep regular times. The companies have to some extent met the small growers in the same way as they promise to do for the butter-makers if these will organise. The initiative, in fact, was not taken by the growers, but by one of the railway companies themselves. Baskets of a certain uniform size were offered to the fruit-growers at a low price, and the tariff was lowered for those who made use of these baskets. This unique system of collection was introduced by the Great Eastern Railway Company in December 1895. The number of such baskets used was²

In the 1st year	60,034
„ „ 2nd „	112,098
„ „ 3rd „	135,860

The mere substitution of uniformity for diversity in the size and shape of basket used in packing was thus sufficient to enable the company to lower its charges. It is evident that much greater results might be expected from the establishment of co-operative depôts, which would not simply pack the goods in a uniform manner, but would secure what is still more important, the sending regularly and in large quantities. Nor would the benefits to be derived by the small holder from co-operative organisation be limited to the lessening of cost of transport. Here again the establishment of depôts would enable the producer to get better terms from the purchaser. The goods, say for example apples, would be carefully graded at the depôts, and whereas the small grower gets little more for his comparatively few first-class fruits than for his ordinary medium or poor produce, the association would have a large amount of each quality at disposal. The best specimens would be chosen out, carefully packed, and sold in quantity by experienced dealers at much better prices than the unorganised individual could get, selling the whole of

¹ See *Report of 1894*, qu. 3841.

² Graham, *Revival etc.*, pp. 211 and 212.

his fruit together in one market¹. It remains to add that the co-operative sale of eggs is also a great advantage to the small holder in his competition with his larger rivals: and that it can easily be organised in connection with other co-operative undertakings.

It is satisfactory to find that as early as 1898 a propagandist society of the same nature as the Agricultural Organisation Society was founded for the special purpose of organising poultry-breeding and the sale of eggs on a co-operative basis. This association, the National Poultry Organisation Society, is now in close touch with the Agricultural Organisation Society; it has an increasing number of branches in connection with it, and their success has been such as to prove how great a service such co-operation may be to the small poultry-farmers². The days are over when the farmer's wife found it profitable to go to market with her basket of eggs on her arm. The market of today demands even of this branch of agriculture the regular transmission of large quantities and uniform quality. The individual small holder cannot possibly respond to this demand, and if it were not for the help afforded him by the co-operative collecting depôts he would be altogether at a disadvantage in the marketing of his goods as compared with the large farmer.

It is therefore possible for the small holder to rid himself by means of co-operation of the disadvantages at which he stands as compared with the large holder in stock-farming and market-gardening. Co-operation can abolish his difficulties in regard of purchase, production and sale. In this way he is able, in those branches of production where he already is superior or at least on an equality with the large farmer, to do away with whatever advantages had remained with the latter. Co-operation can turn what was previously simply an advantage in certain points on the part of the small holder into an absolute and unconditional superiority. The consequence will be that the large farmer in his turn will join the co-operative association, to avoid being crushed by it, realising of necessity that e.g. a co-operative steam-dairy can produce and distribute much more economically than any one person's dairy, however

¹ Cp. *Second Annual Report of the A. O. S.*, p. 7, where it is said to have been the experience of the Bewdley Society that goods properly sorted, of which the buyer can be certain that he will get always the same quantity and quality, command a much higher price in the market than unsorted wares even of equally good quality: so that, as no one but a large grower can sort and send his goods in such a manner, co-operation is the true means whereby foreign competition can be met.

² See *The Marketing of Eggs and Poultry*, Leaflet No. 8 of the National Poultry Organisation Society.

large and excellent. However, co-operation in England has by no means yet arrived at this stage. Although it has begun to develop along with the growing profitableness of the small holding and the branches of production proper to it, its progress is as yet very slow. The causes of this slowness of development are not difficult for anyone acquainted with English agriculture to recognise.

If the co-operative system is to flourish, it presupposes a co-operative spirit; that is to say a certain brotherliness, possibly even some sentimentality, of disposition. In little village communities, with old-established and traditionally respected members, families which have held together, in spite no doubt of many family quarrels, for hundreds of years, the ground is prepared for co-operative action. Such is the case in Hesse or Denmark or Schleswig-Holstein. But England is the land of capitalist agriculture. Neighbours are not known to one another as they are in the village community. Few of the occupiers or cultivators have their homes in the village. They live outside, more as in the Celtic type of settlement, and this in itself prevents the intimate and friendly relationships to be found among the true villagers. The English countryman can hardly be defended from the charge of being extraordinarily suspicious. He does not trust his neighbours, and would rather go alone than in company. Moreover the whole idea of association is much more strange to him than to the peasantry of a country where the village community is still a reality. In the village community any number of things are already done in common; here and there, as in the southern part of Germany, in Switzerland, and elsewhere, even common pastures still exist; but the English farmer has been educated in complete independence and isolation since the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century. He has to be entirely re-converted to the co-operative mind. And the success which the co-operative movement has already attained in some instances seems to show that the farmers, and especially the small farmers, are increasingly realising the blessings it may bring¹.

Co-operation is indeed full of promise for the large holder as well as for the small; but in a different manner. The large farmer finds in it a means of increasing his net profits. The question of competition between the various units of holding is not what moves him

¹ Cp. Mr E. A. Pratt on this subject in his *Small Holders: What they must do to succeed*, 1909, a very useful book so far as the presentment of facts is concerned, but to be used with caution in regard of its conclusions and theories of a general and economic nature. Mr G. Radford's *Agricultural Co-operation*, Westminster, n. d., is also worthy of mention.

to become a co-operator. He can already, without any help from associations, buy cheaper than the small holder, sell on better terms, and so forth. He regards the co-operative system as a profitable thing, but not as a means of protecting himself from the competition of some other type of holding. The small holder, on the contrary, sees in it a means of securing certain advantages hitherto peculiar to the large farmer. The question is therefore of much more vital significance in his case. On the other hand it is quite possible, as has been shown, for co-operation to unite various small undertakings in one large business, so that the large farmer finds that he has been brought comparatively speaking into the position of a small producer, and that he cannot do better than join the association himself. The immediate task of co-operation, however, is to increase the superiority of the small holding in stock-farming and market-gardening, by means of abolishing the weaknesses it possessed in buying, selling and production.

CHAPTER XI

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT AND PRESENT OUTLOOK

THE development of English agriculture and of the unit of agricultural holding have now been traced in some detail over a period of almost two hundred years and as they stand at the present day. It remains to consider briefly the probable future of the two main types of holding in England.

The answer to this problem is to be sought in the fundamental laws of the unit of holding, as they have emerged in the course of our historical study. This has shown that the problem of the unit of agricultural holding is one which is not to be solved in the same way at all times and in all places. There is no type of holding which can be said to be the ideal type for all agricultural purposes. Such ideal holdings can only be found for each individual branch of production. Consequently the problem of the unit of holding is dependent on the particular agricultural conditions of a country at any given moment. These conditions change in the course of time, and among the causes which most essentially influence such changes the circumstances of the market play the chief part. They, therefore, in the last resort determine the problem. As the market conditions change the agricultural production changes, and as the production changes the unit of holding changes too. But the market conditions are mainly dependent on the home consumption of agricultural produce. In the history of the century and a half preceding the year 1875 these circumstances of consumption and consequent market conditions were favourable to the production of corn. It was impossible to obtain corn to the extent to which it can be obtained today from the virgin soil of newly-cultivated countries, and therefore, in the middle of the eighteenth century, England found herself obliged to use her own soil for the extension of her supply of grain. According to the law of diminishing returns, this could only be done at a continually increasing cost, while the population was growing. The less

the country was able to cover its demand for corn, as it had done formerly, by foreign imports at a steady or decreasing price, the more did every new addition to the population suffer under that law, as the bread it needed could only be obtained at a higher and higher price. Relatively more labour and capital were needed to produce the necessary quantity of corn, since as the numbers of the people increased less fertile soils had continually to be brought under cultivation. In other words, the relation of the labour expended to the results achieved was continually altering for the worse, in proportion as the growing population had to put out a comparatively greater effort in order to supply its demand for the chief means of subsistence, or as, in accordance with the law of diminishing returns, the same effort produced less corn than previously. To work more and to get less was the lot of the labouring people of England so long as they were compelled to wring an increasing part of their subsistence from unfruitful soils. This state of affairs was manifested in the fact that between 1760 and 1846 wages never rose in proportion to the very marked rise in the price of bread. As regarded the conditions of agricultural production, however, these high corn-prices had a two-fold effect. In the first place corn became an increasingly profitable crop; and in the second place the profits from the other branches of agriculture fell and indeed in some cases almost vanished. The standard of life of the lower classes deteriorated as the price of corn rose; and hence the profitableness of stock-farming and *petite culture* decreased, in proportion as the high price of cereals together with the fall in real wages diminished the consumption of meat and vegetables. Corn dominated the situation. Now corn is the special property, so to say, of the large farmer. Corn-growing can be most profitably conducted on large holdings. For it demands the greatest possible expenditure of capital, and can be satisfactorily carried on by means of wage-labour and machinery. Accordingly when corn-growing came to the front, the chances of the small holding decreased. The speciality of the small holding is its quantitatively and qualitatively intensive application of labour. It finds its proper sphere in stock-farming and *petite culture*, which demand a detailed care and an amount of painstaking effort not to be obtained from hired labour. Hence it had prospered up to the middle of the eighteenth century. Then the change in market conditions began; they favoured corn-growing, and the production of meat and vegetables became of less and less importance. Wars and bad harvests, and later on a corn-law policy calculated to have the

same effect as wars and bad harvests, drove up corn-prices: and the small holding was swallowed up by the large farm. Landlords threw small holdings together to form large ones. Large farmers took the place of the little farmers and cottiers. The small yeomen sold their land in order to become large farmers. The commons, which had been the backbone of the economy of many small holders, were everywhere divided and turned into a few large farms. This development continued till about the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The market conditions and with them the conditions of production were indeed changed to some extent in 1846. England then ceased to attempt to provide for her growing population almost exclusively with home-grown corn. Free Trade opened the long-closed door to foreign imports. The English people now had the advantage of obtaining its bread at the price current in the international market. But this price did not fall to any considerable extent in the first thirty years of Free Trade, so that the advantage so far only amounted to the fact that the growing population continued to be fed at the same and not at a growing price. This meant a good deal, however, to a country where, in consequence of its corn-law policy, price had hitherto increased along with population. Prices remaining the same, corn-growing was still profitable; while as the standard of comfort rose, the consumption of meat increased and stock-farming came to be of more importance. In the result, corn-production reached a still higher standard, being combined with cattle-farming and consequently with an improved rotation of crops, but remaining the backbone of the system, and therefore still leading to the extension of the large holding.

At the end of the seventies came the turn of the tide. Improved means of communication, together with the bringing into cultivation of virgin soils of unlimited extent and great fertility, led to a fall in the price of corn in the world-market. The market for agricultural products accordingly underwent a great change. The English people was in a position to satisfy its demand for its most important article of food at a constantly decreasing price by means of foreign imports. That part of the national labour-power which had hitherto been devoted to the production of grain now streamed into other employments, in so far as it could no longer produce corn at a price to compete with that imported from abroad. This branch of agriculture was now increasingly unprofitable. But in proportion as the market for corn deteriorated, that for all other agricultural products improved. The less the mass of the people were forced to spend on their bread,

the more could they afford for meat, butter, cheese, fruit and vegetables, especially as money-wages, so far from following the price of bread, were actually rising. The consequence was an enormous increase in the consumption of all those articles which had only under exceptional circumstances been touched by the general population during the period of high corn-prices. Accordingly, the direction of agricultural production was again changed. Intensive stock-farming, the production of first-class meat, dairy-farming, fruit and vegetable growing, and the sale of eggs and fowls took the place of the now unprofitable corn-growing. And the conditions of the market and of production being thus altered, the question of the unit of holding was altered for the first time for more than a hundred years. Large farms diminished in number as corn-growing was driven off all but the most fertile soils. They held their ground where the branch of production adopted suited this form of holding, as e.g. in the breeding of pedigree stock and in sheep-farming. But this was the exception. As a rule, the new types of farming were such as were proper to the small holding. They demanded in the first place the personal labour of the occupier and his family, that is to say, intensive application of labour rather than of capital. Therefore, as corn-prices fell, the chances of the small holding improved, and it emerged from the dark realms of forgotten things to become an object of the greatest interest and importance. Today in England its praises are celebrated and the conditions of its success are studied by agricultural authorities and by political leaders. Landlords, after a century of contrary practice, endeavour to divide their farms and to reduce them to the size which was the rule in the England of the past. The State seizes upon the moment as favourable to its need for the creation of small holdings as a barrier against the flight from the land, and it has become possible to carry through legislation aimed at a revival of such holdings which not so long ago was held to be a Utopian dream, since it would have been in opposition to the economic tendencies of the day.

The dependence of the problem of the unit of holding on the conditions of the market for the various kinds of agricultural produce is thus clearly evident. Those conditions determine what shall be produced; and what branches of agriculture shall hold the first, second or third place. Therefore they obviously also influence the unit of holding. For this in its turn is dependent on the varying profitableness of the various branches of agricultural production.

Here is one great difference between the question of large-scale or small-scale production in agriculture and in industry. In the latter, the smaller unit, the handicraft, is driven out by the larger—factory or machine production—because as a rule *the same goods* can be produced better and more cheaply on the large scale. The competition between the units is simply a competition in cheapness. Every advance in technique, and every new machine brought into use, strengthens the larger unit as against the smaller. In agriculture, on the contrary, the large unit produces differently from the small. Each unit has some branch of production in which it is superior to the rest. The varying profitableness of these branches of production is therefore decisive in the competition between the larger and smaller units in agriculture. The progress of invention is only really important in corn-growing, which does depend more or less on mechanical processes, and therefore admits the use of wage-labour and machinery. If corn-growing is profitable, the result is that, as in industry, the larger unit of production flourishes, because there technical progress can be put to the best advantage. But in every other branch of agriculture technical progress has a much smaller part to play. No mechanical processes, but personal, qualitative labour is the essential condition of success in stock-farming or the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. Where these branches of production are profitable, the smaller unit of production will always have the advantage. Whether or not they will be profitable is a matter determined by the condition of the market, or in other words by the standard of consumption. The course of our study will have shown that the conditions of consumption and of the market in any national economy can never be equally favourable to all branches of agriculture at the same time. Rising corn-prices will favour the extension of corn-growing, but will at the same time limit the consumption of all other agricultural produce, and consequently entail the decay or stagnation of stock-farming and market-gardening. On the other hand, the consumption of all other articles of food will increase in proportion as corn, the most necessary of them all, falls in price. Accordingly the interests of large and small farming are not identical in regard of the conditions of the market. What to the corn-producing large farmer is an improving market will to the small farmer be a deteriorating one. The competition between the large and small unit in agriculture is a competition for the maintenance and improvement of the market-conditions favourable to each.

According as the market turns in favour of this or that product will the problem of the unit of holding be determined in favour of this or that size of farm.

The future outlook, so far as it is ever possible to foresee the future, now becomes fairly clear. Much will depend on whether or not England holds to her present Free Trade policy. After what has just been said, it is not necessary to draw out the consequences to the unit of holding if the market for home-grown corn were to be artificially improved, as it was from 1815 to 1846. The revival of the small holding from 1880 onwards is the work of unconditional Free Trade. To give up Free Trade would be to undermine the foundations of this form of holding, whose development during the period of falling corn-prices has been greeted with so much satisfaction by social reformers of all parties. However, England has not so far adopted the proposals of Mr Chamberlain and his followers: and what we have to discuss at present is the probable evolution of the unit of agricultural holding if the present Free Trade system is maintained.

The possibility of a further development of small holdings and replacing of large farms by small has been questioned on two grounds. In the first place it is said to be doubtful whether the consumption of the agricultural produce proper to the small holding can be so extended as to lead to any considerable increase in such holdings. It is thought that production may increase faster than consumption, and so small holdings become less profitable. In the second place it has been said that even assuming that demand would continue to expand, production could not be increased to meet it, since these particular products cannot be obtained everywhere, nor to an unlimited amount. This last was the consideration in the mind of the Commissioners of the nineties when they made their often repeated assertion that small holdings could only supply a remedy for agricultural distress where they could enjoy such conditions as were favourable to their particular products.

In regard of the first objection, that the consumption of the smaller agricultural products will not rise sufficiently to allow of an increase of small holdings adequate to compensate for the great decay of the large farm system, it is of the first importance to remember how greatly such consumption has increased in recent years. The figures for the imports of certain classes of such goods show this clearly. The following table gives the amounts and values of such imports into the United Kingdom from 1886 onwards; but of course only

such goods as are also produced at home are here given, as it is only these which enter into the present question. The figures in each case are per thousand, the ciphers being omitted¹.

Year	Butter		Cheese		Condensed Milk	
	cwts.	£	cwts.	£	cwts.	£
1886	1543	8141	1734	3871		
1887	1513	8010	1836	4514		
1888	1671	8913	1917	4546	352	734
1889	1927	10,244	1907	4490	339	704
1890	2027	10,598	2144	4975	407	847
1891	2135	11,591	2041	4813	444	900
1892	2183	11,965	2232	5416	481	930
1893	2327	12,753	2077	5160	501	1009
1894	2574	13,456	2266	5474	529	1079
1895	2825	14,245	2133	4675	545	1083
1896	3037	15,344	2244	4900	611	1170
1897	3217	15,916	2603	5885	756	1398
1898	3209	15,961	2339	4970	817	1435
1899	3389	17,213	2384	5503	824	1455
1900	3378	17,450	2705	6837	987	1743
1905	4147	21,586	2442	6339	893	1584
1908	4210	24,080	2306	6684	920	1606
1909	4062	22,424	3390	6829	991	1731

The imports of other products of *petite culture* have also risen enormously of late years, as the table on the next page will show. Here also the figures are for thousands, the ciphers being omitted².

The imports of potatoes, onions and cherries also show a considerable increase, as do those of vegetables; but unfortunately the statistics for these last do not distinguish between the different kinds of vegetables, so that they are not available for our purposes. However, it is clear that the consumption of all these articles of food is enormously increasing year by year. The statistics also show that the value of the imports of butter, cheese, condensed milk, apples and eggs alone is about equal to the total value of wheat imported. In 1909 the value of those five articles of import was £41,200,000, while

¹ Cp. *Agricultural Statistics* for 1903, pp. 142 f., and *ibid.* for 1909, Part III, pp. 290-i.

² *Agricultural Statistics* for 1903, pp. 152, 144, and *ibid.* for 1909, pp. 300, 292, 318.

the average value of the wheat imported in 1908 and 1909 was £41,700,000¹.

Year	Apples		Pears		Plums		Poultry and Game	Eggs	
	Bshls.	£	Bshls.	£	Bshls.	£	£	Thsnds.	£
1892	4514	1353	637	296	412	199	583	1336	3794
1893	3459	843	915	347	777	331	578	1325	3875
1894	4968	1389	1310	411	777	302	480	1425	3786
1895	3292	960	407	166	401	166	605	1526	4003
1896	6176	1582	483	206	560	241	705	1589	4184
1897	4199	1187	1051	377	1043	497	730	1683	4356
1898	3458	1108	491	221	922	434	637	1730	4457
1899	3861	1186	571	266	558	294	785	1940	5044
	<i>cwts.</i>		<i>cwts.</i>		<i>cwts.</i>				
1900	2128	1224	476	366	423	392	1010	2025	5406
1905	3494	2065	417	407	480	524	999	2259	6812
1908	3376	2079	523	515	402	427	1052	2185	7183
1909	3129	2007	569	504	485	473	1028	2125	7233

The prophets of the nineties who held that the consumption of such produce would soon cease to expand were therefore obviously mistaken. The import figures prove that, on the contrary, the consumption of precisely those articles which are produced by small holders has vastly increased. There has also been an increase in the consumption of products which are not imported, as fresh milk, which has already been mentioned. Here again no figures are available, but every authority on English agriculture admits the growth of the consumption of milk as an undisputed fact. So Mr Anderson Graham wrote in April 1903²:—"Mr Hunter Pringle was of opinion when he wrote" (i.e. in his Report to the Commission of 1894) "that too many people were going into this (the dairy) branch of farming, and that it would be ruined by over-competition. Experience has not justified his forecast. The consumption of milk appears to grow, not only with the population, but per head." But the figures quoted above show that this undoubted increase in the consumption of articles proper to the small holder has by no means all inured to the benefit of the English agriculturist. The increase in the stock kept, in the area under fruit

¹ *Agricultural Statistics for 1909*, p. 293.

² In the *Morning Post* of April 11, 1903, p. 2.

and vegetables, in the number of eggs sold and poultry kept, and so forth, do indeed show that English agriculture has taken some share in supplying the demand. But still a considerable part of the supply is provided by foreigners. This would appear to give force to the second objection mentioned above, namely, that the home production of articles of the kind in question is necessarily limited. It is claimed that the high import-figures for butter, eggs, fruit and the rest show that the conditions of agriculture in England are unfavourable to, and in part prohibitive of, the production of such articles. But the experience of recent years gives no uncertain answer to this suggestion.

That one important branch of small farming, viz. stock-farming, has shown itself capable of extension has already been proved. When the agricultural crisis was at its worst, and the fall in the price of corn was making itself most severely felt, the absolute ruin of English agriculture was freely predicted. It was said that in Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk and other counties, soil and climate made it simply impossible to transform arable into pasture or in any way to develop stock-farming further than it was already carried. But the Scottish farmers acted while English agriculturists hesitated, and today even in Essex flourishing dairy-farms and market gardens are common. Where pasture has not been laid down, stock-farming is carried on by means of stall-feeding, a method which writers on the subject had long been pressing on English farmers¹. A system of temporary pasture has also proved very successful where neither stall-feeding nor permanent pasture was suitable. Mr M. J. Sutton showed, as a result of his very thorough study of the question, how capable of extension this system of temporary pasture is². There are thus no unconquerable difficulties in the way of the expansion of stock-farming and dairying. It is true that English farmers, like the agriculturists of every country, are conservative, and hold to their old traditions. They are often sadly lacking in the marvellous capacity for adaptation to circumstances shown by their Scottish brethren. To this conservatism is attributable among other things their great reluctance to adopt co-operative methods, necessary as these are in the interests of technical and

¹ Lloyd Baker, *Dairying in Denmark*, Bath, 1896, p. 11. See also Mr Graham in the *Morning Post*, loc. cit.

² M. J. Sutton, *Permanent and Temporary Pastures*, 1888, pp. 4-5 :—"I quite admit that there are large tracts of land in this country which are unsuited for the formation of permanent pastures...But there is no farm land with which I am acquainted that will not profitably respond to the alternate system."

economic progress. Persons acquainted with Danish methods of dairying declared in the nineties that England was twenty-five years behind Denmark in her butter-making¹. It was not more favourable conditions of production, but co-operative organisation, and technical perfection in production and distribution, which gave Denmark and other countries their standing in the English markets. The question is whether England will adopt the methods of production and distribution demanded by modern conditions of international competition.

The outlook in regard of other branches of production is much the same. The extension of fruit and vegetable-growing is also hindered by difficulties of a technical description. Thus, for example, Mr Morgan, the Secretary of the Fruit Growers League, told the Committee of 1889 that England had the same opportunities of successful apple and pear-growing as America; perhaps better. English growers could in particular produce fruit of the best quality, for which high prices were obtainable. Thousands of tons of fruit which were yearly imported could be grown quite as well in England as abroad; the English soil and climate were excellently suited for the purpose². One authority wrote briefly³:—"There are few farms that do not comprise one or more fields admirably adapted for the growth of such crops as table peas, French beans, celery, early cabbages, turnips, small fruit, herbs, etc.; and still fewer farms that do not include an orchard capable of improvement or extension." An expert reported on the fruit-culture of Gloucestershire⁴ that certain parts of the country "might easily have been converted into a veritable gold mine." "If such grand apples," he wrote, "can be grown on the brashy Cotswold soil by good cultivation, it shows what ought to be possible in the more favoured districts. Soils and positions are important factors in success, but the need for education is even more pronounced."

Poultry-farming is another branch of agriculture equally capable of expansion. The enormous demand for fowls is by no means yet met by the supply⁵, so that such an expansion is very desirable.

¹ *Report of 1894*, qu. 4758.

² *Small Holdings Report, 1889*, qu. 5806, 5809-13.

³ A. R. Cragg, *Specialities in Farming*, in the *Journal of the Bath etc. Society*, 1903, pp. 41 f.

⁴ *Annual Report of the Technical Instruction Committee of the Gloucestershire County Council*, July, 1902, p. 34.

⁵ Cp. Graham, *The Revival etc.*, p. 126.

But, as Mr Rew's report showed¹, chicken-farming "depends not on local advantages, but on organisation and skill," and could therefore be developed in any district.

The English agriculturist need thus be under no apprehension that the consumption of fruit, vegetables, dairy-produce, etc. will increase less rapidly than the production; he need fear no over-production in this sphere. At present consumption is expanding much more rapidly than is the home production. But the reason is not that England lies under some technical difficulty or disability in the supply of such produce. On the contrary, it is just as possible to increase the production of these articles in England as it is in the competing countries of Denmark, France, Belgium, etc. That these and other countries have at present to some extent driven the English agriculturist out of his home market is simply due to the better organisation which the foreigner brings to the production and distribution of his goods. England needs to adopt these co-operative methods of organisation with all possible speed. It is to be hoped that the efforts of the Agricultural Organisation Society in this direction may meet with the success they deserve.

Nevertheless, in spite of all that English agriculturists have left undone in their work of turning the new market conditions to their own advantage, English agriculture has admittedly experienced a great revival of late years. The growing demand of the mass of the population for meat, fruit, vegetables, butter, cheese, milk, eggs, etc. secures its future in so far as it succeeds in adopting the best methods available, and in giving up unprofitable branches in favour of those now profitable. A condition of success equal in importance to that of the introduction of co-operation is, however, the maintenance of Free Trade. It is Free Trade which, by cheapening bread and meat, has raised the purchasing power of wages, and so increased the consuming power of the mass of the population, to the benefit of the agriculturist. But assuming that the economic development of England continues on the lines of the last quarter of a century, while agriculturists seize the advantages which they have by their own fault hitherto failed to seize, what will be in the future the problem of the unit of holding?

The future will be similar to the past. Small holdings will once again play the chief part. Where corn-growing, pedigree stock-

¹ As summarised by Mr Channing, *op. cit.* p. 37. Cp. also the *Estate Book*, 1909, p. 254, under *Chicken Rearing in Sussex*:—"Why is this industry practically confined to this district? There is not the least reason why it should be, as equally favourable conditions could no doubt be found elsewhere."

breeding, or sheep-farming remain profitable, the large farm will survive, owing to the intensive application of capital which in these branches of agriculture gives it an absolute advantage over the small holding. But it will continue to make way for small holdings where the other branches of production are most profitable, and above all where the small holders succeed in organising themselves co-operatively. It will give way to the small holding, that is to say, where intensity of labour is of greater importance than intensive application of capital, as is the case in most forms of stock-farming and in fruit and vegetable culture.

In the last resort it must always be the condition of the market which will determine the solution of the problem of the unit of holding. Non-economic tendencies may of course influence and limit the natural economic development: and here lies a great danger to the national economy¹. For every hindrance to a necessary economic development is an injury to the mass of the people of the nation concerned. But for that very reason whatever social or political hindrances exist to the natural evolution of the unit of agricultural holding in England will not be permitted to continue. The people have the power, through their Parliamentary government, to get rid of conditions which are seen to be hurtful to their interests.

The continued development of the small holdings system appears to be in every way advantageous to the national economy. It compensates for the decay of the large farm system in proportion as the extension of stock-farming and *petite culture* compensates for the unprofitableness of corn-crops. No doubt these branches of production make greater demands on the capacity of the individual agriculturist than corn-growing did. Small farming puts a greater strain on human faculties, and demands a greater output of personal energy, than was necessary in the days when the profits on corn were steady and the large farm system ruled. But just because its survival and development

¹ A gloomy picture was painted of certain tendencies of this description by Mr W. Scawen Blunt in the *Nineteenth Century* for 1906 (Vol. LIX), p. 964. He says:—"One thing however stands absolutely in the way, and must be changed before chicken farming can become at all a general industry. I say it with regret, but without hesitation, chicken farming and fox-hunting cannot exist together; and if we want to maintain the one we must not maintain the other. Chicken and egg farms fail principally in Sussex because to escape the depredations of foxes, the chickens cannot be let run freely in the fields and hedgerows, where to a large extent they should pick up their living. Shut up in wire enclosures the cost of feeding is too great. The fox is a wide night-roamer, and cannot be dealt with locally, as is the case with other vermin, by help of trap or gun or poison. Until therefore he ceases to be preserved by landowners it is useless to talk of our competing in Sussex with the chicken industries of France, where the fox finds no quarter."

make these demands it would seem, to be in the highest degree favourable to the progress of English agriculture. From the point of view of social policy, on the other hand, a system of agriculture depending mainly on small holdings is undoubtedly the most satisfactory. Such a system prevents the rise of that opposition of class interests which is so marked a feature of the large farm system with its wage-labourers. The development of small holdings and allotment holdings lessens the great danger of capitalist agriculture, which is that the landless labourers drift to the towns, there to seek compensation for what they have lost upon the land. Nothing but small holdings can keep the people on the land so long as the industrial labour-market is open to them. Nevertheless, social reformers desirous of seeing the small holding system maintained and developed must admit, in view of the facts of English agricultural history, that it is the general economic conditions which at any given time and place determine the problem of the unit of holding. The small cultivator can only thrive when the articles which he can produce better and more cheaply than the large farmer can also be sold to better advantage than the characteristic produce of the large farm. The surest means of securing the existence of the small agriculturist is to raise the consuming-power of the mass of the population, by keeping their food, and more especially their bread and meat, free from taxation, and by reforming the conditions of town life in every possible way. For the better the condition of the labouring classes, the greater will be their demand for those articles in which the small holder finds his proper domain. Mr R. A. Yerburgh, M.P., who has already been mentioned as one of the great champions of agricultural co-operation, recently expressed in well-chosen words the tendency of the present conditions of agricultural life towards the maintenance of peace, both in social and in political matters. The reader who has followed the historical description given above will appreciate the truth of Mr Yerburgh's words, which are quoted here by his express permission, though they have not previously been printed. He says:—"The position of the farmer is now entirely different to what it was when he depended upon the production of the necessaries of life, corn and meat. Then, it is said, the common toast at the farmers' ordinaries was 'To the next bloody war'; the reason being that a war meant high prices for the farmer. Now the situation is completely different. The farmer with us is chiefly interested in producing what we may call luxuries, such as milk, cheese, eggs, poultry, fruit. The sale of these depends upon

“the prosperity of the country. If war breaks out, our commerce and
“industries suffer, and the wage-earners find their means of subsistence
“threatened. The result is an immediate lessening of the demand for
“luxuries, and a consequent diminution of prices for the farmer. Thus
“the farmer now, in place of being interested in war, has a supreme
“interest in peace; and as the small holders will be almost entirely
“occupied with producing luxuries their interests will lie in the same
“direction, and so they will be a powerful factor along with the
“farmers in the preservation of peace.”

There is then harmony between the modern developments of English agriculture and agricultural holdings and the interests of the great mass of the population. Ricardo's dictum, that the interests of agriculture were irreconcilably opposed to those of the rest of the community, is no longer true. Since 1846 England has refused to sacrifice the good of the whole to the interest of any class; it has ceased to protect its corn-producers from foreign competition. To this policy it owes the rapid development of the small holding system, and the technical improvements in agricultural methods of the last five and twenty years. To this policy it is due that the inevitable crisis of 1880 onwards did not spell ruin, but led to the gradual re-organisation of the agriculture of the country. To this policy above all is due the harmony of interest between that re-organised agriculture and the needs of the great majority of the English people.

APPENDIX I

THE MODERN SMALL FARMER AND THE QUESTION OF HOME COLONISATION: A PROBLEM OF SOCIOLOGY

PERHAPS German experience under the German settlement laws best shows what class of settlers is most suited to take up small holdings. They are men who were themselves in their earlier life little independent cultivators, or industrial workers living on the land, who have held a bit of land as a by-employment; or else peasants' sons, such as come from the west into Posen and West Prussia in order to be able to obtain land of their own. That is to say they are in any case men of peasant stock. "We see," writes Herr Belgard, "how e.g. the Westphalians and Hanoverians take the fine old peasant holdings of their homes for their model, and turn all their efforts to the creation of an equally stable property and equally excellent live-stock upon it." It is the same class who when they emigrate become hard-working cultivators in foreign lands. Everywhere they carry with them a tradition and an ideal, in the memory of the conditions under which they grew up.

How different are the conditions in England! There is no peasantry to draw upon, unless in a few isolated districts such as the Isle of Axholme or a few places in Cumberland where yeomen of the old type are still to be found. The sons of small or medium farmers are early employed on their father's farm or on that of some neighbour; but when they grow up they begin to move away. They see nothing specially honourable in the fact that their father holds a farm, which, under the capitalist tenant-farmer system, may be here to-day and there to-morrow; they do not see in it any hereditary obligation, or even anything which they desire to imitate. On the contrary, they are without traditions, and are only desirous of making their way into spheres which seem to them more satisfactory. Town life and industrial employment attract them. The father may have worked his way up from the position of a mere wage-earner to that of an independent farmer, and so after a long struggle have attained the goal of his highest hopes. But to the son that position seems a matter of course, and the desire for a higher social and economic standing awakes in him very early.

¹ M. Belgard, *Parzellierung und Innere Kolonisation*, Leipzig, 1907, pp. 340 f.

It is therefore clear that the home colonisation of England cannot be brought about on the same basis as if the colonists could be drawn from an existing peasantry. If in Germany the settler has the sense that he is carrying on a tradition, and maintaining the social standard of his forefathers, in England quite other motives lead a man to take up a small holding.

(1) England has an agricultural proletariat, a class of landless agricultural labourers, who may be brought out of their dependent position and established as small cultivators. This class has for over a century been produced as a necessary part of the large farm system; while for some thirty years past the revival of small holdings has made it possible for its members to rise to an independent position. In their case there is therefore no question of the maintenance of a hereditary tradition; on the contrary, when an agricultural labourer takes a small holding he climbs into a social position which is as a matter of history altogether new to his class. Moreover, not only the social position, but also the whole economic position, is new to him. He will have worked all his life as a wage-earner on large or medium-sized farms, probably devoted to arable in the first place, worked in conjunction with stock-feeding based on large pastures and hay-fields: whereas on his small holding he will have to adopt branches of production which demand quite a different kind of labour, where machinery is at a discount, and the work must be done by hand in great detail and up to a very high standard of quality. Economic difficulties such as these can only be overcome by that peculiar zest for work produced by the hope of making so great a rise in the social scale. That this desire for independence does exist is proved by the fact that in the year 1909, for example, 25 per cent. of the applications for small holdings came from agricultural labourers.

(2) The second category of possible colonists—and it is a very miscellaneous one—consists of applicants who have not hitherto been in any way occupied in agriculture. They would, so far as their previous economic activity is concerned, be classed as town-dwellers, or at any rate as industrial workers; but from their very various callings they desire to pass to the land. In this class, though not the most important part of it, are the village artisans and their congeners—butchers, bakers, grocers or small shopkeepers. To many of these, the Small Holdings Act is a means of obtaining land as a by-employment¹. Their shop will remain the backbone of their economy. But others give up their industrial employment and devote themselves entirely to farming. Two examples of what men of this class have achieved are here appended, taken from the evidence given before the Committee of 1906².

¹ Cp. *Report of a Conference as to the Administration of the Small Holdings Acts*, 1908, p. 35.

² See *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, *Minutes*, qu. 2227.

(a) George Batchelor. This man had been a village shoemaker with a rather small income. By energy and industry he saved enough to take a little holding, which he cultivated with great satisfaction and apparently with pecuniary success. He had in 1905 a banking account, and was adding to his land year by year. New buildings were erected on his farm at a cost of £180, so that the holding was brought into very good condition.

(b) George Williams. This man had a newly-formed holding, the house and buildings having cost about £340. He had been employed on the railway, but gave up his situation. He had planted his land with fruit trees; and as he had a family growing up, his labour cost him very little.

Another case, which was described to the Committee by the person in question himself¹, was that of a quondam cobbler, who got tired of his work, and took an acre of orchard land. He ended by holding 30 acres, not as tenant, but as owner. A Wiltshire co-operative association, the Mere and District Small Holding Society, lets holdings of from one to 30 acres, chiefly for pasture-farms or market-gardens. Among its tenants are men who were formerly respectively a baker, an innkeeper, a decorator, a coach-maker, a road-mender, a groom, etc., and several hawkers². In another county, Denbighshire, a farm of 79 acres was cut up by the County Council. The largest holding, which covered 44 acres, was taken jointly by two brothers, who had formerly been miners in the neighbourhood. Their stock consisted of 14 cows, 19 pigs, two cart-horses and two ponies³. But one of the most remarkable examples of change from industrial employment to the independent position of small land-holders is offered by the history of Catshill in Worcestershire. A large number of the inhabitants of this village were nail-makers, and nail-making was apparently a "dying trade." Some of the ratepayers therefore applied to the County Council for land. The Council bought an estate of 147 acres, and formed holdings of 3½ to eleven or twelve acres. The nail-makers were thereupon transformed into market-gardeners. The fact that they were near the great market of Birmingham was of great service to them. They produced not only fruit and vegetables, but pigs and poultry, and needed no other employment. According to a report laid before the Committee of 1906 their position was most satisfactory⁴.

All the settlers in the cases given above, although they did not come from agricultural occupations, had either lived on the land (as villagers, on the railway, in country house employment, etc.), or at any rate had not lost all connection with it. From these must be distinguished the type of settler who is a genuine town-dweller. A writer on the subject divides these into two groups⁵, namely, first, town workers who have country wives, or who

¹ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes*, qu. 9012-9072.

² *Report of a Conference etc.*, p. 104.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴ *Small Holdings Report, 1906, Minutes*, qu. 3901 ff., 3909, 4003 ff.

⁵ H. E. Moore, *Our Heritage in the Land, 1906*, p. 112.

have had some experience of agricultural work, and who for the sake of the health of themselves or their family want to get into the country, even if they can only make a smaller income there. Secondly, town workers who see that in consequence of increasing age, or of the depression of their trade, they are likely to lose their employment in a few years, and drop to the position of casual labourers.

There is no doubt that there is a considerable number of men of this latter type desirous of getting onto the land. The action of some of the labouring people of Leicester, most of them employed in the boot trade, is characteristic. A number of the factory workers put themselves in possession of allotments, having organised co-operatively for the purpose¹: and one of their objects, as reported by Mr E. A. Pratt², was to use these allotments as a stage towards and an education for the taking of a small holding. And in fact the attempt to obtain allotments was soon followed by the formation in the same district of a co-operative association for the creation of small holdings³. Of town-dwellers of quite another type Mr Pratt writes⁴:—
“Apart from the factory workers who have gained experience on allotments... there are men who, though intelligent, capable, and willing, are physically unfit for the stress and strain of life in great cities, especially when close confinement in an office or counting-house may be included therein. Others there are who, though considered ‘too old’ for the employment on which they have hitherto been engaged, still possess an amount of energy and vigour, the devotion of which to a healthy rural pursuit would...provide them with a fresh and more or less profitable employment...Others, again, the sons of manufacturers, business men, or professional men, might well start in the country in some occupation which either appealed to their tastes more, or would suit the condition of their health better, than following in the footsteps of their fathers.”

Evidently the material available for home colonisation purposes from industrial employments or of the town type is of very various kinds; it is in this respect very different from the material provided by the class first considered, which consisted mainly of agricultural labourers, and to some extent of farmers' or bailiffs' sons. It is certainly at first surprising to find that agricultural life does attract non-agricultural sections of the population; the continued and well-grounded complaints of a rural exodus naturally seem to point in the other direction. Objections to any such movement were made before the Committee of 1906. Men well acquainted with the conditions declared that there was no sense in planting inexperienced townsmen on the

¹ According to the *Annual Report of the Agricultural Organisation Society* for 1908, one of these co-operative societies, the Winchester and District Allotment Holders Association, rented 86 acres and had 660 members.

² E. A. Pratt, *The Transition in Agriculture*, 1906, p. 268.

³ *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, *Minutes*, qu. 5059.

⁴ Pratt, *op. cit.* p. 306.

land¹. Mrs Wilkins (Miss L. Jebb) put the case more wisely when she said²:—"I do not much believe in bringing town people out of the towns to the country, but that is a very different thing from bringing back a man to his native district, where he has been in the farming or market-gardening line in his youth, and returns to it."

But even this limited prejudice against townspeople hardly seems well founded so long as many examples can be found of successful small holders who have come from the towns and were of the towns. Mr Pratt, whose book has already been cited, and who is a well-known writer on agricultural subjects (he has explored the whole of rural England), takes a broader view of the matter. "The ordinary 'unemployed' of our large towns, and the ne'er-do-wells of urban life in general, are not the type of men who could be settled on the land straight off as small holders, whatever else might be done with them." But he enumerates a variety of "desirable town types," and adds:—"Starting with the assumption that the townsmen in question were alike intelligent, energetic, and determined to succeed, there ought to be no insuperable difficulty in the way of their acquiring, within a reasonable time, a sufficiency of knowledge...to be able to make, at least, a living" out of agriculture. "As a matter of fact, some of the greatest successes achieved in several of these minor industries of late years have been won by enterprising men from the towns³."

The questions necessarily arise in this connection: What is the relation of these two most important classes of settlers, the agricultural labourers and the industrial workers, one to another? and, What is the comparative importance of the two groups?

The attraction of the land for non-agricultural sections of the population at the present day is by no means exclusively to be traced to a love for "mother earth," or a longing to go "back to the land" for its own sake. If this were the determining motive, its results must have made themselves evident long ago, whereas this return to the country is a phenomenon of quite recent date. The movement is certainly not less due to the fact that the re-organisation of English agriculture has created conditions which seem to be particularly well suited to men who have been brought up to trade or industry. The smaller branches of agricultural production, which have now become the very basis of English agriculture, make quite different demands on the farmer than would be made by a small holding devoted to corn supplemented by stock-feeding. The small farms of the eighteenth century also sold fruit, vegetables, eggs, poultry and so forth. But they sold them for the most part to customers in their own village or in the nearest market. The markets of to-day are as a rule far from the small holder himself, and the old personal relation of farmer and customer is gone. The farmer has

¹ *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, *Minutes*, p. 474.

² *Ibid.*, qu. 7914.

³ Pratt, *op. cit.* pp. 306 ff.

to produce for the trade, and to provide such articles as suit the wholesale dealers. Regular transmission of goods of a standard quality is, as has been seen above, essential. In the case of eggs, for instance, there are five or six recognised qualities, from the new-laid egg and the fresh egg to the cooking egg of the second or third degree. The goods must further be carefully packed in sawdust in specially prepared boxes. But these important points¹ of grading and packing have more in common with the work to which a factory hand is accustomed than with that of the farmer or countryman of the old style. And the same is true in the matter of the sale of fruit.

The business man, again, will find himself more at home in, say, negotiating the sale of the produce of a market-garden than will the old-fashioned agriculturist. The best profit on fruit and vegetables is to be obtained not by selling to the local dealer, but from some wholesale trader in a large town. A business connection with such a man has to be worked up. Mr Pratt says² that some vegetable-growers get 7s. to 8s. for their broccoli crates where others, less careful or capable in their choice of dealers, are beaten down as low as 1s. The first are, as Mr Pratt points out, "better business men." In this connection may be noticed the telephone question, which was discussed by an expert before the Committee of 1906. "A man who is producing goods of a perishable character, which might be perishing at the time he was about to telephone, would have exact information as to prices, and as to how the market stood, so that he could dispose of his produce instantly, whereas without the telephone he might have to wait so long that his goods would have perished altogether³." Here again it is evident that purely business qualities are of the first importance to the small holder under modern conditions. He must know the market, have good connections, and be quick to take advantage of favourable turns of price. Such demands, so far as small holders are concerned, are of quite modern origin.

Again, not only upon the market-gardener, but also upon the small farmer proper, certain demands are made which involve more than a purely agricultural training. In the case of a dairy-farm, for instance, the English public, or at least its upper classes, demands milk which shall be pure and clean; and the dealer has to assure himself that the dairy from which he obtains it is in a properly sanitary condition. To glance at some of the technical publications on the subject⁴ is to realise that the old-fashioned dairy has to evolve into something much more nearly resembling an industrial-workshop. The proper cleansing of the cow-sheds, the sterilisation of pails and cans, the use of cooling-machines and modern methods of filtering, all demand something altogether different from the old-fashioned hand-labour

¹ Cp. Leaflet No. 1 of the National Poultry Organisation Society, p. 2.

² Pratt, *op. cit.* p. 122.

³ *Small Holdings Report*, 1906, *Minutes*, qu. 5620.

⁴ See *Market Day Lectures*, 1905-6, pp. 33 ff.

with bucket and dung-fork. Poultry-breeders using incubators, or growers of fruit and flowers under glass, are equally far removed from the old conditions. Worthing alone has 1220 forcing-houses, whose pipes laid end to end would cover more than 136 miles; some of the growers there have artesian wells of their own; some have small windmills or steam-machinery for pumping purposes¹. Here again it is evident that we have a branch of modern agriculture demanding much technical knowledge and skill, and qualities not traditionally supposed to be found in the ordinary countryman.

It may perhaps be suggested that where technical knowledge and a cultivated intelligence are essential there the large farmer has his proper sphere, whether or not the branch of production pursued be one otherwise belonging to the small holder. But the various demands made upon the cultivator in any case cannot be considered apart from one another. All authorities on English agriculture are agreed that for certain branches of production, as dairying, market-gardening and so forth, the fundamental condition is and remains the intensive personal labour of the occupier and his family; a kind of labour which can never be obtained from a hired labourer. For this reason the small holder has always an advantage in these branches of production over the large farmer. This advantage cannot be seriously endangered by the growing need for business qualities and technical skill. But these demands will have their effect on the total result which the small holder is in a position to obtain from his holding.

The need for such qualities may be very much lessened if the small holders are co-operatively organised. Co-operation, in fact, may almost amount to a complete disburdening of the small holder in this particular. A cooling-station or steam-dairy takes over the mechanical part of the work of a modern dairy, and co-operative collecting depôts relieve the farmer of the need for a business head. But co-operation is relatively speaking little developed in England, even though it is increasing; it is not everywhere applicable (e.g. where success depends on individual methods, or where the type of holding is very various, etc.); and it cannot take over all the functions which have been noticed as necessary on a modern small holding.

Where therefore the large cultivator, in spite of his superior business capacity and technical knowledge, has not the advantage over the small holder, and where co-operative methods cannot relieve the small holder of the necessity of exercising such qualities, it is evident that the small holder who can bring these powers to his work will be the person best fitted to conduct a variety of branches of production, and will in fact have an extraordinary advantage in them. It becomes easy to understand why non-agricultural sections of the population are to-day being attracted into agriculture, and why they show such capacity for survival in the struggle for

¹ Pratt, *op. cit.* pp. 90 f.

existence. They possess already the necessary business qualities and technical capacity.

Intelligent observers have not failed to recognise the nature of this development. Thus e.g. Mr Newsham writes of the small holdings of Hampshire:—"In most parts of the county there appears to be ample opportunity for the development of mixed holdings by men who have been brought up on the land and know the practical side of their business. The town-bred man must of necessity have an up-hill struggle, though his business capacity or training might stand him in good stead¹." And Mr Pratt expresses the matter still more clearly:—"Industries, in fact, such as dairying, horticulture, floriculture, stock-raising, etc., as distinguished from the growing of corn, are occupations requiring technical knowledge, skill, business capacity, and unremitting personal attention on the part of those engaged therein—qualities and qualifications not necessarily possessed by even the average farmer of the old school, and still less by the average agricultural labourer of the passing generation, however efficient the latter may have been in the days when the work he had to do made less demands on his intelligence than upon his physical endurance²."

Under some circumstances, therefore, the non-agricultural type of settler will prove more than equal to the man who has been on the land all his life. He will even be superior to him in certain branches of production, as in fruit and vegetable growing. But the agricultural labourer will be superior to the townsman when corn-growing and stock-farming are in question, because there technical capacity and business qualities have a smaller part to play, and his agricultural experience becomes a matter of great importance.

In general it may be said that the non-agricultural settlers instinctively direct their attention to those branches in which they can best use their particular qualities. The place and kind of work they choose are regulated accordingly. Unlike the agricultural labourer, who is able to raise himself to an independent position, but then develops a tendency to comfortable methods, they are full of the desire "to get on." They retain a capitalistic character. They find in various branches of modern agriculture quite as good chances of profit-making as they could in trade or industry. This is noticed by almost every writer on the small holdings question. Mr F. Impey, of the Board of Agriculture, who has inspected many small holdings, has astonishing things to report on this part of the subject³. A land-agent who had over 1000 small holdings to administer told him that he knew dozens of men owning £100 to £500 who twelve or fifteen years earlier had been earning their 15s. a week. A man who had formerly been a groom and gardener stated that on his holding of 5½ acres he could save £40 a year,

¹ In the *Journal of the Board of Agriculture*, 1908-9, p. 93.

² Pratt, *op. cit.* pp. 303 f.

³ F. Impey, *Small Holdings in England*, 1909, pp. 19-28.

and in one year saved as much as £90. He had planted no less than 1400 fruit trees, and in one year sold 1000 head of poultry. In another case Mr Impey was astonished to find a man paying £5 rent for $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre. But the occupier told him that the value of the strawberries sold off that bit of ground in the last year had been about £58. It is no wonder that townsmen, hearing such stories, begin to think that there is "something to be made out of" even the land, if a man only goes about it in the right way.

The material for home colonisation in England, then, is roughly of two classes. Men who have grown up under the influences of the town, men of commercial or industrial tendencies, stand side by side with men who have lived all their lives upon the land. There is room for both. Both, under the given conditions of production and distribution, that is to say in certain branches of production and under certain market conditions, may be fit instruments for the re-organisation of the unit of agricultural holding in England. Therefore what at first sight seems an extraneous element in modern agricultural society, viz. the quondam townsman or the man of city instincts, is not in fact to be regarded as an artificial product of reforming zeal. His appearance is a necessary result of the economic transition through which English agriculture has been passing in consequence of the ruin of what was once its special branch of production. And for this reason the lack of a peasant population will prove no fatal hindrance to the home colonisation of England. In many districts it is not peasantry of the old style who are appearing or who can appear. Agriculturists of quite other qualifications and outlook are in course of development; agriculturists for whom a quite different social and economic organisation is growing up from that which the little farmers or yeomanry of the past could ever have possessed.

APPENDIX II

TABLE I

Area of agricultural land under the various types of holding throughout the English counties.

(Arranged in four geographical districts from the merely alphabetical arrangement of the Return as to the Number and Size of Agricultural Holdings in 1895.)

	1—5 acres			5—20 acres		
	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land
I.						
Bedford	3385	1259	2126	11,847	4929	6918
Cambridge	5833	1978	3855	23,796	6840	16,956
Essex	5545	3562	1983	20,216	11,291	8925
Hertford	2958	2401	557	8949	6790	2159
Huntingdon	1808	1181	627	7847	4563	3284
Lincoln	17,901	9398	8503	82,537	43,091	39,446
London	606	496	110	1925	1623	302
Middlesex	2173	1662	511	8920	6969	1951
Norfolk	9789	4178	5611	37,921	16,219	21,702
Suffolk	5361	2585	2776	17,408	7234	10,174
York E.	5471	3235	2236	19,241	10,806	8535
Total for District	60,830	31,935	28,895	240,607	120,355	120,252
II.						
Berks	2898	2381	517	11,157	8835	2322
Bucks	3495	2582	913	12,763	9615	3148
Hants	7980	5253	2727	27,577	19,032	8545
Kent	6643	4169	2474	31,872	20,912	10,960
Leicester	4593	4236	357	26,792	24,526	2266
Northampton ..	3974	2704	1270	17,614	12,722	4892
Notts	5343	4128	1215	26,840	20,145	6695
Oxford	3029	1811	1218	11,740	7956	3784
Rutland	572	476	96	3220	2739	481
Surrey	3919	3141	778	16,578	12,968	3610
Sussex	5811	4919	892	25,345	21,018	4327
Warwick	5439	4434	1005	23,301	20,235	3066
Total for District	53,696	40,234	13,462	234,799	180,703	54,096
III.						
Cornwall	10,337	7425	2912	47,723	28,602	19,121
Devon	8348	6385	1963	42,614	32,074	10,540
Dorset	3440	2490	950	14,849	11,188	3661
Gloucester	8628	5825	2803	27,235	20,610	6625
Hereford	4462	3985	477	19,449	16,360	3089
Monmouth	3021	2673	348	17,013	15,564	1449
Salop	9831	8805	1026	38,873	33,749	5124
Somerset	10,671	8626	2045	43,488	37,984	5504
Wilts	4987	3186	1801	19,570	14,193	5377
Worcester	8175	4366	3809	25,155	18,953	6202
Total for District	71,900	53,766	18,174	295,969	229,277	66,692
IV.						
Chester	10,981	9029	1952	43,025	33,928	9097
Cumberland	3446	2981	465	17,087	13,776	3311
Derby	8329	7814	515	47,540	44,380	3160
Durham	3914	3452	462	23,089	21,075	2014
Lancaster	10,057	8085	1972	78,880	66,351	12,529
Northumberland	3128	2663	465	15,726	13,644	2082
Stafford	9792	8743	1049	46,669	41,953	4716
Westmorland ...	1431	1351	80	8532	7966	566
York N.	9155	7983	1172	39,437	33,881	5556
York W.	18,609	15,937	2672	119,356	104,276	15,080
Total for District	78,842	68,038	10,804	439,341	381,230	58,111

Table I

	20—50 acres			50—100 acres		
	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land
I.						
Bedford	14,433	6363	8070	21,414	9012	12,402
Cambridge	37,499	11,369	26,130	45,486	12,448	33,038
Essex	41,816	16,092	25,724	91,328	28,113	63,215
Hertford	13,619	8418	5201	26,978	12,726	14,252
Huntingdon	11,991	6128	5863	15,397	6651	8746
Lincoln	118,352	47,974	70,378	162,024	54,172	107,852
London	1995	1537	458	2232	1406	826
Middlesex	12,837	9175	3662	17,279	12,292	4987
Norfolk	70,756	24,505	46,251	109,919	31,559	78,360
Suffolk	41,364	11,240	30,124	97,063	21,554	75,509
York E.	30,834	13,675	17,159	56,631	18,673	37,958
Total for District	395,496	156,476	239,020	645,751	208,606	437,145
II.						
Berks	17,155	11,073	6082	26,050	14,754	11,296
Bucks	21,661	14,767	6894	43,256	25,509	17,687
Hants	41,164	24,576	16,588	60,617	29,403	31,214
Kent	61,551	36,351	25,200	98,703	52,884	45,819
Leicester	46,138	40,034	6104	73,441	55,645	17,796
Northampton ...	31,567	21,619	9948	51,266	32,790	18,476
Notts	39,730	24,066	15,664	59,072	29,031	30,041
Oxford	18,371	10,745	7626	34,864	17,475	17,389
Rutland	6898	5919	979	9855	7415	2440
Surrey	25,183	16,786	8397	40,394	22,094	18,300
Sussex	46,742	32,241	14,501	92,798	52,836	39,462
Warwick	37,056	30,132	6924	60,831	40,872	19,959
Total for District	393,216	268,309	124,907	651,147	380,768	270,379
III.						
Cornwall	88,513	40,282	48,231	135,682	51,835	83,847
Devon	90,478	55,302	35,176	214,009	109,520	104,489
Dorset	23,586	17,278	6308	39,237	28,110	11,127
Gloucester	43,540	33,605	9935	71,052	49,821	21,231
Hereford	28,869	20,261	8608	50,167	31,547	18,620
Monmouth	30,913	26,976	3937	55,883	45,120	10,763
Salop	46,599	35,043	11,556	73,980	47,942	26,038
Somerset	79,772	66,905	12,867	128,938	105,050	23,888
Wilts	30,177	21,691	8486	49,432	36,307	13,125
Worcester	36,781	26,481	10,300	58,832	37,324	21,508
Total for District	499,228	343,824	155,404	877,212	542,576	334,636
IV.						
Chester	70,347	49,285	21,062	125,072	75,446	49,626
Cumberland	45,922	31,648	14,274	123,618	63,867	59,751
Derby	78,635	67,905	10,730	109,210	87,745	21,465
Durham	33,869	27,646	6223	67,939	42,560	25,379
Lancaster	189,893	145,262	44,631	237,487	157,761	79,726
Northumberland	25,850	22,036	3814	41,939	30,755	11,184
Stafford	71,402	58,943	12,459	103,830	78,374	25,456
Westmorland ...	28,509	25,202	3307	61,034	50,875	10,159
York N.	66,709	46,452	20,257	141,030	84,605	56,425
York W.	178,877	142,651	36,226	218,492	153,708	64,784
Total for District	790,013	617,030	172,983	1,189,651	785,696	403,955

	100—300 acres			300—500 acres		
	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land
I.						
Bedford	99,411	37,411	62,000	70,189	25,298	44,891
Cambridge	160,222	36,997	123,225	106,675	25,632	81,043
Essex	363,616	105,050	258,566	176,886	53,261	123,625
Hertford	129,047	42,864	86,383	100,767	28,853	71,914
Huntingdon	84,744	31,373	53,371	53,510	20,389	33,121
Lincoln	510,080	158,495	351,585	304,742	92,870	211,872
London	5175	3311	1864	1516	922	594
Middlesex	49,122	35,429	13,693	14,645	10,355	4,290
Norfolk	322,057	80,881	241,176	223,067	59,140	163,927
Suffolk	326,429	74,456	251,973	146,030	34,899	111,131
York E.	278,879	86,977	191,902	156,868	42,012	114,856
Total for District	2,328,782	693,244	1,635,538	1,354,895	393,631	961,264
II.						
Berks	125,782	54,325	71,457	81,124	29,732	51,392
Bucks	202,765	111,130	91,635	87,669	53,810	33,859
Hants	207,784	78,004	129,780	135,774	41,055	94,719
Kent	315,811	148,698	167,113	135,565	64,559	71,006
Leicester	233,455	163,889	69,566	60,813	43,196	17,617
Northampton ..	238,393	145,160	93,233	138,779	82,886	55,893
Notts	203,584	87,206	116,378	67,748	25,047	42,701
Oxford	168,784	78,894	89,890	114,043	46,747	67,296
Rutland	33,797	19,766	14,031	20,293	9266	11,027
Surrey	120,985	57,649	63,336	45,005	22,096	23,509
Sussex	246,600	127,896	118,704	104,925	53,609	51,316
Warwick	244,410	152,425	91,985	94,174	59,118	35,056
Total for District	2,342,150	1,225,042	1,117,108	1,086,512	531,121	555,391
III.						
Cornwall	268,674	97,792	170,882	46,302	17,541	28,771
Devon	692,462	343,329	349,133	136,539	69,633	66,906
Dorset	150,536	103,113	47,423	97,168	54,555	42,613
Gloucester	261,325	167,504	93,821	129,828	65,996	63,832
Hereford	229,149	142,043	87,106	92,309	60,005	32,304
Monmouth	111,594	86,155	25,439	18,170	13,339	4831
Salop	367,186	223,442	143,744	155,393	89,897	65,496
Somerset	418,523	312,412	106,111	137,358	92,465	44,893
Wilts	204,716	137,571	67,145	129,400	63,474	65,926
Worcester	201,683	117,834	83,849	58,791	35,175	23,616
Total for District	2,905,848	1,731,195	1,174,653	1,001,258	562,080	439,178
IV.						
Chester	254,947	162,188	92,759	26,929	19,044	7885
Cumberland	293,308	154,518	138,790	63,373	38,219	25,154
Derby	215,528	164,862	50,666	33,849	25,649	8200
Durham	238,009	137,485	100,524	51,623	31,356	20,267
Lancaster	265,569	176,075	89,494	28,627	21,563	7064
Northumberland ..	257,630	176,640	80,990	193,523	130,344	63,179
Stafford	265,851	175,422	90,429	82,940	49,305	33,635
Westmorland ...	106,477	84,238	22,239	24,574	19,220	5354
York N.	464,853	252,550	212,303	106,978	61,889	45,089
York W.	495,186	300,351	194,835	133,570	81,088	52,482
Total for District	2,857,358	1,784,329	1,073,029	745,986	477,677	268,309

Table I

	500—1000 acres			over 1000 acres		
	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land	Total area	Pasture-land	Arable land
I.						
Bedford	29,025	12,090	16,935	5293	3411	1882
Cambridge	85,407	17,094	68,313	23,606	4600	19,006
Essex	112,067	38,574	73,493	15,737	4788	10,949
Hertford	49,509	14,562	34,947	4320	1512	2808
Huntingdon	30,448	13,291	17,157	4905	2467	2438
Lincoln	260,875	75,821	185,054	61,178	18,921	42,257
London	952	952	—	72,707	19,617	53,090
Middlesex	3307	2249	1058	29,893	10,705	19,188
Norfolk	231,397	60,860	170,537	16,184	4380	11,804
Suffolk	105,589	25,347	80,242	—	—	—
York E.	105,885	26,584	79,301	—	—	—
Total for District	1,014,461	287,424	727,037	233,823	70,401	163,422
II.						
Berks	72,689	25,904	46,785	31,128	16,516	14,612
Bucks	27,233	16,799	10,434	2390	1578	812
Hants	159,796	47,882	111,914	65,277	20,919	44,358
Kent	81,988	47,106	34,882	16,124	10,996	5128
Leicester	19,386	14,159	5227	7695	5774	1921
Northampton ...	63,337	36,366	26,971	13,664	9540	4124
Notts	36,561	12,882	23,679	9359	6026	3333
Oxford	58,118	22,133	35,985	6667	1907	4760
Rutland	8598	4762	3836	4091	1507	2584
Surrey	26,048	12,149	13,899	6883	5396	1487
Sussex	121,598	68,889	52,709	34,740	19,738	15,002
Warwick	25,275	13,988	11,287	4194	3499	695
Total for District	700,627	323,019	377,608	202,212	103,396	98,816
III.						
Cornwall	5497	3169	2328	1220	432	788
Devon	27,993	16,182	11,811	1470	630	840
Dorset	122,221	63,744	58,477	36,259	19,122	17,137
Gloucester	101,444	38,588	62,856	13,436	5143	8293
Hereford	19,359	13,332	6027	1542	1032	510
Monmouth	6348	4588	1760	—	—	—
Salop	24,917	15,522	9395	1184	1121	63
Somerset	37,181	25,620	11,561	4718	4373	345
Wilts	199,948	91,168	108,780	121,242	56,779	64,463
Worcester	13,635	7753	5882	1051	362	689
Total for District	558,543	279,666	278,877	182,122	88,994	93,128
IV.						
Chester	5245	3901	1344	3009	2929	80
Cumberland	22,806	15,426	7380	9844	9670	174
Derby	8668	6726	1942	1426	1406	26
Durham	18,531	11,860	6671	2170	1921	249
Lancaster	11,915	9672	2243	1248	1227	21
Northumberland	131,495	75,156	56,339	38,116	24,944	13,172
Stafford	16,875	10,254	6621	6708	4355	2353
Westmorland ...	14,848	11,583	3265	5567	5507	60
York N.	35,059	20,695	14,364	1076	1016	60
York W.	31,611	22,653	8958	6196	3904	2292
Total for District	297,053	187,927	109,127	75,360	56,879	18,481

TABLE II

		Eastern and north-eastern counties	South-eastern and east midland counties	West midland and south-western counties	Northern and north-western counties	England
		District I	District II	District III	District IV	
		acres	acres	acres	acres	acres
Arable land per 1000 acres of agricultural land ¹		687	461	401	325	467
Land under wheat " " " "		103	57	39	18	54
The total area of all holdings here considered (i.e. holdings of 1 acre to over 1000 acres) was.....		6,274,645	5,664,359	6,392,080	6,513,604	24,844,688
Holdings of 1—5 acres	Total acreage	60,830	53,696	71,900	78,842	265,268
	Percentage of total area	0·97	0·95	1·12	1·21	1·07
	Permanent pasture	31,935	40,234	53,766	68,038	193,973
	Arable land	28,895	13,462	18,134	10,804	71,295
	Percentage of arable to total area	47·50	25·07	25·22	13·70	26·87
Holdings of 5—20 acres	Total acreage	240,607	234,799	295,969	439,341	1,210,716
	Percentage of total area	3·84	4·15	4·63	6·74	4·87
	Permanent pasture	120,355	180,703	229,277	381,230	911,565
	Arable land	120,252	54,096	66,692	58,111	299,151
	Percentage of arable to total area	49·98	22·02	22·53	13·24	24·70
Holdings of 20—50 acres	Total acreage	395,496	393,216	499,228	790,013	2,077,953
	Percentage of total area	6·30	6·94	7·81	12·13	8·36
	Permanent pasture	156,476	268,309	343,824	617,030	1,385,639
	Arable land	239,020	124,907	155,404	172,983	692,314

Holdings of 50—100 acres	Total acreage.....	645,751	651,147	877,212	1,189,651	3,403,761
	Percentage of total area	10'32	11'50	13'77	18'89	13'70
	Permanent pasture	208,606	380,768	542,576	785,696	1,957,646
	Arable land	437,145	270,379	334,636	403,955	1,446,115
	Percentage of arable to total area	66'15	41'52	38'13	34'95	42'48
Holdings of 100—300 acres	Total acreage.....	2,328,781	2,342,150	2,905,848	2,857,358	10,434,138
	Percentage of total area	37'12	41'35	45'46	43'86	42'00
	Permanent pasture	693,244	1,225,042	1,731,195	1,784,329	5,433,810
	Arable land	1,635,538	1,117,108	1,174,653	1,073,029	5,000,328
	Percentage of arable to total area	70'23	47'69	40'42	37'55	47'92
Holdings of 300—500 acres	Total acreage.....	1,354,895	1,086,512	1,001,258	745,986	4,188,651
	Percentage of total area	21'60	19'18	15'67	11'45	16'86
	Permanent pasture	393,631	531,121	562,080	477,677	1,964,509
	Arable land	961,264	555,391	439,178	268,309	2,224,142
	Percentage of arable to total area	70'94	51'11	43'86	35'96	53'09
Holdings of 500—1000 acres	Total acreage.....	1,014,461	700,627	558,543	297,053	2,570,684
	Percentage of total area	16'12	12'37	8'74	4'56	10'35
	Permanent pasture	278,424	323,019	279,666	187,926	1,078,035
	Arable land	727,037	377,608	278,877	109,127	1,492,649
	Percentage of arable to total area	71'66	53'89	49'93	36'73	58'06
Holdings of over 1000 acres	Total acreage.....	233,823	202,212	182,122	75,360	693,517
	Percentage of total area	3'73	3'56	2'85	1'16	2'79
	Permanent pasture	70,401	103,396	88,994	56,879	319,670
	Arable land	163,422	98,816	93,128	18,481	373,847
	Percentage of arable to total area	69'89	48'86	51'14	24'52	53'90

¹ Pleasure grounds, woods, plantations, etc. are not included: cp. the *Agricultural Returns* for 1895, p. 38.

APPENDIX III

LIST OF AUTHORITIES QUOTED

In the following list the place of publication is named where it is other than London: and in the case of London publications after 1850 the publisher's name is quoted where the British Museum Catalogue shows it. Parliamentary papers are distinguished by the printing of the letters P.P. before their title.

The authorities quoted in Part I of the book (The Development of the Large Farm System and the Decay of the Small Holding) are divided according to the chapters, dealing as these do with (I) the Agricultural Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, (II) the Corn-Law Period, and (III) the First Thirty Years of Free Trade, respectively. The arrangement is as far as possible in order of publication, except that under heads II and III the few books to be cited both there and under the preceding head or heads are given in alphabetical order at the beginning of the section.

The authorities quoted in Part II (The Economics of Large and Small Holdings at the Present Day) are given according to the year of publication simply.

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