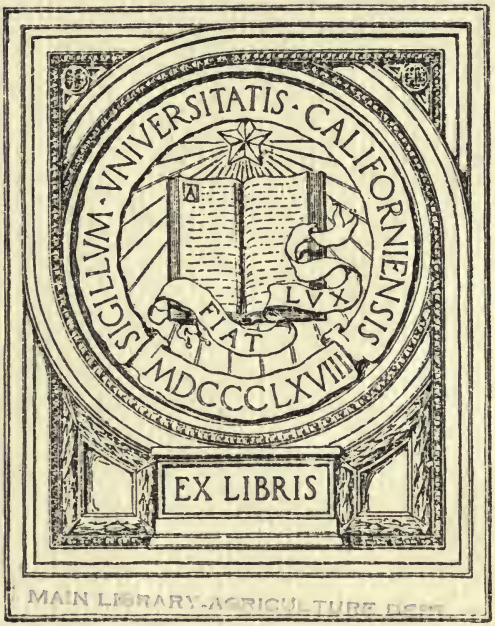
AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION & ORGANISATION

GEORGES PADOROU



AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION & ORGANISATION

AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION & ORGANISATION

By GEO. RADFORD, M.A.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED

London Hodder and Stoughton
and at New York and Toronto 1917

Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld.,
London and Aylesbury.

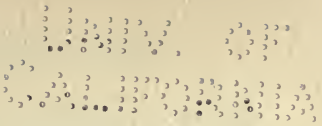
PREFATORY NOTE

This book was issued some years before the War as an attempt to show that scientific management and business organisation were needed to bring an adequate amount of produce out of the land. I have now adapted it to the new conditions in the hope that the State may decide to carry through in an orderly and effective manner the development of agriculture. When, two years ago, I sketched in "The State as Farmer" the need for Public Ownership, in view of self-preservation, I relied upon the fact that the student was aware of the details which I had already presented. Those details were originally defined in connection with the efforts which were being made by the Agricultural Organisation Society; for Co-operation is good so far as it goes even in limited applications of the principle. But Co-operation can never become perfect until it is universal, and the universal to be just must be national. Otherwise there are set up many conflicting interests which I need not elaborate: Urban and Rural,

Landed and Landless suggest them all. But that which is of supreme importance at this juncture is the fact that the State has already in its anxiety taken possession of the land and is endeavouring to bring fertility out of its acres. If rents are to be stereotyped, wages raised against the farmer, meadows to be ploughed up and cropping dictated, a policy will be initiated which I submit is one much more drastic than my own. But in spite of this the result must be less happy, for from the nature of the case those permanent measures which I advocate for building up a thriving well-ordered system cannot be undertaken : the panic legislation of the past is only too likely to be reproduced with equally disappointing results. Whereas, if the five years which are in contemplation were used to give co-operative organisation a real trial upon the lines discussed in the following pages, I am hopeful that even the most obdurate would give way to the new policy. I make no pretensions as to having invented or conceived this policy ; it is the obvious one to those who know the common facts. But I do not disguise my own opinion upon one point and it is this : those who are willing to accept the new Land Tenure so that the State may work untrammelled will become by that act the truest patriots of us all.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS



I

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The agricultural problem is largely a commercial one. Or, to put the matter in another form, the commercial test, although it does little itself to solve the problem, is the final means by which we may ascertain how the problem is to be solved. Success in farming must eventually come back to profits. And profits depend upon the demand for produce, and upon the prices obtainable for it. If we analyse this produce we shall find that, while we yet bring to market the finest meat and other articles in the world, we only do so in such small quantities that but a tithe of the population can hope to procure them. Millions of money go abroad yearly for that intermediate class of goods which are not the best, but are very much more tempting than is the vast proportion of our own productions.

But the saleableness of these foreign products does not depend upon their superior quality alone. The commercial side of the question comes in when the fact is recognised that uniformity of quality—whether that quality be very good or only indifferent—is obtainable in the case of those casks of butter, cases of eggs, and barrels of apples which reach us from across the seas. The large dealers, who are a necessity of distribution, meantime, when millions of human beings are located together in hundreds of more or less mean streets, must, in order to deal with any certainty and regularity at all, be able to buy produce upon a name or a mark which guarantees within certain limits definite qualities. When the broker gets to actual samples he is still able to deal with large quantities which are uniform throughout the bulk. In the case of English produce this uniformity and regularity are largely absent. Each little farmer makes his own bit of butter, cures his own bacon in his own peculiar manner, after feeding his pigs according to his special whim, and the result is that there arrives at the great central distributing market an inchoate mass of nameless articles, without

character and without the hall-mark of a single saleable brand.

The millions of money which go abroad, even if they are no incentive to our farmers to energetic action, should at least be a guarantee to those who attempt to face the situation that money need not stand in the way of reform. The demand is there, and every business man knows that such demand is the first and most important factor in every undertaking which aims at making a profit. Besides the demand itself—and no doubt there is often an imperious demand for grapes by thirsty souls in the Sahara—it must be recognised that distance and transit difficulties do not stand in the way of supply. We are at least nearer to our own markets than the colonials and the foreigners are. The money, as we have seen, is being used elsewhere, and need only be diverted to our home produce. The problem is thus purely a local and home question. We have to beat the outside producers in quality rather than in price, and before entering upon the details of improving our own products, we have to arrange so that large bulks may be obtainable of uniform qualities. There are two ways of ensuring

some sort of regularity. One is to collect the separate items of manufacture and of raw produce, and so to grade and sort them at some central depot as to be able to place upon the market bulks of some reasonable and saleable kind. The other is to arrange the manufacture itself at a factory, and thus secure uniformity by averaging the raw material itself. The former process would perhaps be adequate to deal with milk, poultry, eggs, fruit, and garden produce—at least, in the early stages of the commercial movement towards successful marketing of goods. But it could never bring to a beneficial issue the treatment of all the varieties of cream and butter, cheese-making, bacon curing and kindred processes, so as to establish great county trade-marks for commodities in the perfecting of which all the talent and industry of such counties had striven in beneficent rivalry.

Every farmer or tiller of the soil, even in small holdings and allotments, must have a surplus of some kind that is to be turned into cash. No agriculturist can supply all his requirements from the fruits of his own acres; he will need tea, sugar, and clothing, and he must therefore determine with himself whether

his own surplus, through which he obtains these things, is to be stock, milk and its products, hay, cereals or green crops. He will be wise to arrange to sell those things which men rather than animals consume, for, by doing so, he obtains the ultimate profit. It may be that his best plan is to dispose of many separate surpluses rather than depend upon one alone. The more he subdivides his surplus, however, the greater difficulty he has, naturally, in finding a market if he seeks one unaided, for he has under these circumstances to look for many buyers instead of one. Some holdings may be so small that it would be almost impossible to do justice separately to the commercial side of their crops. Yet the total produce of all these small holdings and of all these separate surpluses makes a vast bulk when added up. It becomes obvious, therefore, that common action, or co-operation, which is already a tried, though not yet a quite perfected, machine, is an absolute necessity for collecting into one bulk, arranging in various grades, and manufacturing into national products, with a name and a reputation, all these various foods and fruits of the earth, with a view to their disposal in the best

markets. The few gallons of milk per day, the few bushels of apples per year, which are sent to the depot do not lose, but most materially appreciate in value when bulked with those many similar small lots which flow in from the country round. The cost of sale is less, and the price obtainable is greater when large quantities rather than small ones are offered, for the dealer eventually comes to sell by brand rather than by sample, and can more readily dispose thus even of a year's supply than of weekly and isolated lots of unknown and nameless goods.

The large manufacturer or dealer with a trade already secured will not, of course, see the wisdom of falling in with co-operation until its results have satisfied him that he runs no risk. But on the whole he stands to gain rather than to lose by the co-operation which his neighbours use. If his produce still remains the best that is made in the district, and that district establishes a good name in the markets, he continues to ride, so to speak, on the top of that good name ; and, in the event of the co-operators reaching his price for their goods, he is enabled to exact some advance on that. Particularly may

he do this if he entrust the sale to that very depot from which he has hitherto held aloof.

I have used the word depot, and shall have to explain in detail subsequently what this term involves. I have ignored in these preliminary remarks the very subjects which are put in the forefront by most co-operators, and shall have to consider almost immediately the questions of joint purchase, seeds, and the cost of carriage. But I ignore them advisedly until I have established the proposition, or rather until I have drawn attention in the first place to the undoubted fact that English produce is not put upon the market in a marketable condition. To make an unsaleable thing cheaper either by reducing its cost of production, or by bringing it to market at a lower rate of freight, does not make it intrinsically more palatable, or more easy to sell as a commodity of uniform and pleasant quality. It only adds to the glut of non-marketable goods. Until we have established a system of drawing from the whole country-side produce scientifically grown, thoughtfully and tastefully averaged and graded, and handled for the market in a businesslike manner, we shall continue to meet foreign

competition like babes rather than as men and women. To "protect" such methods as we are now using is only to send us more soundly to sleep, and this is a sufficient objection if there were no other reasons against tariffs. The first and final effort of co-operation, therefore, is, in my opinion, to be directed towards the commercial perfection of our produce: the more familiar work of co-operative societies is chiefly useful as making it easier for the farmer to attain that end.

One other point remains to be referred to in these preliminary words. When we have established the uniform bulk with its proper trade-mark, there will be required for the safety of the public, if for no other purpose, very strict imperial rules for accurate descriptive guarantees concerning the contents of such bulk. Such rules will not necessarily help the English farmer, but it is probable that the temptation to adulterate will beset the foreigner more than the home producer, because suitable ingredients for deception will be more ready to his hand. However this may be, in these times of the chemical expert and his diabolical ingenuity, it is absolutely imperative that the public should know the

ingredients which compose the food which is offered, and something of the source whence it comes. Until this safeguard is strictly enforced, the encouragement of our home farmers to aim at perfection in their products and in their processes will be largely stultified.

II

TRANSPORT

Whether Co-operation sets itself to develop joint-sale or joint-purchase, it looks first of all to the railway for help. The railway brings the feeding-stuffs, seeds, manures, and implements, and it takes away the surpluses of milk, crops, stock, and manufactured articles. If these receipts and deliveries are carried through in a methodical manner, the railway becomes, by the necessity of the case, the nucleus of the Agricultural Depot upon which so much is going to depend. For woven into the texture of co-operation itself are a mass of details which no railway can adequately deal with. The whole *raison d'être* of the movement, in the matter of freight, is an attack upon the high rates necessitated by small lots. These small lots are placed in the hands of the carrier as bulked or united

details in order that they may be treated under the lower scale. The clerical work of consolidating and of again separating the parcels is essentially the duty of the senders. It is obvious, therefore, although the good nature of the railways may tend to obscure the fact, that, by the discharge of the foregoing duties, the goods warehouse of the railway company becomes the embryo depot for Co-operation in the district.

The railways have recognised the needs of co-operation to such an extent that they have in certain cases erected sheds to deal with the storage of the feeding-stuffs and manures which the societies had bought. I will not attempt to give a summary of what some of the great lines have done in this matter, but I note that instances of this kind have occurred in order that I may point out that the first and most natural thing for Co-operation to do is to make terms with the railway which it is proposed to use for the erection at the various stations of premises in the most convenient position for dealing with the traffic. Generally speaking, no position can be so economical for the depot as that of the railway itself, where no double cartages are required

either on inward or outward freights. There is only one consideration to be placed against this. If the station is at a distance from the town, and retail dealings are contemplated in the town itself, the depot at the station cannot completely discharge the double duty. But in studying the all-important subject of transport, these two questions should never be lost sight of : first, the importance of annihilating unnecessary cartages ; second, the common sense of placing the depot in a first-rate position for securing the retail trade. Where these two conditions can be united in a railway depot the ideal is attained.

When we have established this, and arranged for the possibility of its extension to meet growing requirements, we shall only have reached the fringe of this great question of transport. I will take for granted for the moment that several minor stations on the line—say, two or three on each side of the principal depot—can be treated as one in handling such freights as whole milk. When such milk is shipped by members of the same society and grouped as one bulk from its headquarters, that convenience will no doubt be afforded by the companies who have shown

themselves so eager to assist the farmers. But at this point the real difficulty begins. Who is to tap the country which does not lie along the line? The real spirit of co-operation is to consider the outlying districts with equal anxiety as those more favoured in situation. Farming cannot be looked upon as properly organised until co-operation reaches its kindly and helping hand to every acre of the country, far as well as near. It is not possible to conceive of an adequate system of transport from the distant farms in any locality if that transport be left to each individual farmer to supply. We may more easily imagine the fifty different hours at which the straggling carts of fifty farmers will arrive, some over-loaded and some half-full. And yet, in the case of many of the items which are to reach the depot, punctuality is of the essence of delivery. The labour of man and horse removed from the work of the farm is not the least evil of such a system.

In these days of motor traction it is unnecessary to depend upon such archaic methods. But it is necessary in view both of efficiency and economy that a regular service of collecting

vans should traverse the district once or twice a day. The labour attached to such a service would be perhaps one-tenth of that called for by individual cartages. Delivery would be made regular, for the milk and other produce would have to be punctually at hand, or the whole collection of a district would lose the train. The loss in unused space would be reduced to a minimum, for the average van accommodation needed for the district could be calculated upon within a little. And not the least benefit and convenience to the villages and hamlets would be that passenger traffic could very well be added to the goods service for which primarily the system of motors had been set on foot.

A good motor service will adapt itself to the needs of the farms and to the inadequacy of the roads: it may be used to carry all classes of goods to and from the depot, and the workers on the land to and from their homes. By a little management it can be made to cover the whole ground and to leave no produce uncollected, from a quart of blackberries to a stack of hay. We can, without undue speculation, look forward to a refinement of transport when the well-packed van

of delicate goods is placed upon and removed from the rails intact, and thence driven to its destination without a single item of its contents being disturbed.

In the matter of the motor service as well as in that of the depot, I have come to the conclusion that the expense must be borne by the Counties themselves. However largely the companies may be willing to assist, it seems imperative that the control of all these things—times and routes and methods in packing and handling—must be left to those whose produce is at stake. The companies are masters in regard to their own lines, but, subject to those regulations which govern that traffic, the co-operators, which to me has come to mean the county organisation, only can determine the minor details which may be necessary to perfect the system of collection and delivery.

It must not be supposed that the motor service is to act merely as a feeder to the railways. Its first duty is to collect produce of all descriptions for the depot, which will then deal with it in three ways. It may grade and sell the produce to retail buyers and shops round its own doors ; it may manufacture it

and still sell within its own district ; lastly, it may put it into saleable condition, both by grading and manufacture, for delivery to the large markets through the medium of the railway.

Now, though I have begun with the collection of produce, and have referred to an organisation for clearing the whole neighbourhood of its surplus products, we must not forget that this same agency will be used to distribute throughout the same district the various commodities which are needed on the several farms. These operations of the co-operative movement will be dealt with later. But I may point out here that the road service for passengers and goods will be as valuable in its own way for distributing into the country the requirements of farmers and villagers as it will be in collecting efficiently and cheaply the produce of the land. I need not say that the worker in the town, the housewife, and the labourer will welcome a lift home in the evening with as much pleasure as they will use the agency in the morning to expedite their work.

In the Report of the Agricultural Committee of the Tariff Commission these words occur :

—" The increase in local rates and railway rates and the lack of railway facilities are also spoken of as deterrents to increased cultivation. According to a Worcester witness, the Midland Railway requires that fruit is to be collected and delivered in two-ton lots. The difficulty is for one grower to gather fruit from his neighbours and make up a two-ton lot. One man does not like to expose his market to his neighbour. It is *just possible* that an improvement in this respect could be made by developing the system of co-operation. It has not been tried at all in our district." And again, these pathetic words appear in the mouth of one witness : " It is no uncommon thing to see our trucks of fruit shunted for the foreigner to pass, and so be in the market first." To understand the truth about these inert and misleading statements, it is only necessary to refer to the almost frantic efforts which the railway companies made to assist our home agricultural traffic. Besides preaching the necessity for co-operation in making up consignments, as in the cases of Mr. Frank Ree at Lilleshall, and Lord Claud Hamilton at the Great Eastern Conference, both as long ago as 1895, the companies instituted a series of

pis allers, such as the small parcel system at special rates for agricultural and garden produce. All these attempts to achieve the impossible in order to encourage whims are beside the mark. The British farmer "does not like to expose his market to his neighbour," while all the time the very point of difficulty is that, in the real sense, he has no market to expose. His market has been taken by Siberia itself!

The railway system in England is a splendid, highly burnished machine, capable of almost any strain, but it is not invulnerable to rust. It cannot be adapted with success to unpunctuality and incompetence: it should be used, not abused. If anyone will sit down and thoughtfully work out what is involved in the small parcel system, or even, except in extreme cases, of Mr. Rider Haggard's parcel post, he will very quickly turn to methods which are more effective. The householder who wants butter, poultry and eggs—milk is fortunately eliminated from the parcel system—is one of, say, forty millions, and has to look round among the same forty millions for someone ready to supply him on terms. Supposing that every

parcel contained intrinsically good material, there are all the differences of taste and pocket to cater for, and not one of those millions would be certain to receive exactly what he had set his taste upon. Again, it is only childish to suppose that any company can deliver, even at special rates, a parcel of even fifty-six pounds at the same rate as a four-ton lot: the Post Office clearly does not pretend any such thing. But more important perhaps than all these objections is the fact that the suggested system ignores the necessity for, and the cost of publicity in, the effort to obtain regular customers. To convey from A to B a commodity exactly suited to the taste of the latter, a vast amount of information, advertising, and comparison of products is required. Unless some quarter of a million farmers are prepared to circularise the whole population, and to send samples of their produce to compare with Danish butter, French poultry, and Italian eggs, a true knowledge of the goods which our farmers have to offer could not be given by any system of small parcel dealing. And it must be remembered that such system would be an alternative used only to avoid co-operation, and nine-tenths

of the goods produced under it would be condemned before being tested, for they would be full of all the evils of the present methods of collection and manufacture which we so heartily deplore.

III

THE DEPOT—I

We have seen that the natural place for the Depot is at the railway company's goods station, and that, though the company's staff would no doubt endeavour to perform the clerical work of grouping consignments and again separating them, this duty is properly one for the district to undertake. The depot which thus comes to birth out of the natural working of the effort to secure lower rates of freight, becomes, by the same working of natural causes, an instrument great in the development of agriculture. There are two kinds of depot upon the railway to whose characteristics we may first refer. There is, in the first place, the receiving station, the depot into which agricultural produce is collected, which, as we have seen, discharges also many duties of distribution; in the

second, there is the distributing centre in London and in other large cities and towns. The receiving depot, which lies in the midst of an agricultural district, collects the surplus milk and eggs, meat and poultry, vegetables and fruit, and at this it has been blindly and inefficiently working—under no guidance for the common good—during the past. The mere collecting, therefore, even if it were done for a society bent on a reduction in freights, would not be sufficient; but, as I have tried to show on an earlier page, there is much to do in the grading and averaging of this produce, so as to establish a definite quality with a regular market and public quotation. Added to this are a series of factories which are of the essence of the undertaking. The milk of the district may be turned into butter, clotted cream, cream cheese, and cheese of various kinds; the pigs may be made into bacon or into other marketable commodities; the cattle and sheep may be shipped in bulk in the form of meat, under the most approved methods of cold storage. I shall have to postpone the detailed attention which each one of these factory operations demands, but at this point

I ask the thoughtful to consider all these products as the output of one vast organisation bent upon establishing articles of repute with uniform qualities and trade-marks by which they may be known and inquired for. There will thus reach the great cities a mass of produce in an infinitely simpler form than in the old days. Separate consignments will, of course, be made to any station for the convenience of large buyers, but in the main the great Metropolitan and other depots will act as the markets for the various districts which they serve. The districts themselves will always be able to quote at each depot for the produce which arrives, perhaps exclusively, at the others ; and a systematic method of grouping all products for minor stations will be elaborated in the course of distribution.

The return freights, which are so important to all railways, will be arranged in the natural working of the trade. Taking the railway, therefore, as the first and most important link between grower and consumer, the chief requirements of the depots which are established upon them are stores which will house, on the one hand, the manures, seeds, and implements which the growers require, and,

on the other, the various products of the land. By an ordinary business system of requisitioning, the whole of the products of the country will be available to the consumer, and every requisite of the most up-to-date farmer will be in stock ready for his demand. I have referred to the factories which should be established for the production of cheese and its kindred goods, but there is no reason why other simple mills and appliances should not be in use for the crushing of grain and for the performance of the other similar operations which may be required.

The next duty, which we shall find the depot discharging, is that of organising the joint use of the more important agricultural implements which the neighbourhood may require. Co-operation, looking at the fields of the district, as at those upon a single farm, may purchase such machinery as will be sufficient for the work treated as a whole, and the manager will organise the operations in the best interests of all. It would naturally follow that the staff of the depot would undertake the marketing of the various crops in the co-operative district, and in the neighbourhood of large mills this bulking of the grain

would be a great convenience to the buyers as well as an advantage to the sellers. The common use of machinery would be a matter purely for the committee to decide upon, and such community of use would be regulated by the special needs and arrangements in each separate area. But the experience of one would be the common property of all. In all probability the fact that districts were open to discuss such joint use would bring about the manufacture of machinery of various kinds to meet the varied demands of local bodies.

One highly important development must follow from the institution of depots such as I have sketched. These centres of commerce and manufacture will call out the resources of the most experienced and educated minds. The most effective treatment of every acre cannot be effected merely by goodwill and hearty co-operation. The most technical knowledge and most expert training will be required to bring out all that is best in these farms. What to grow on the land, how to treat the soil at every season of the year, what live stock to breed, and how to deal with that live stock and its products, are questions which require the highest intelligence, ex-

perience, training and learning. High quality in the purchases and purity and saleable qualities in the manufactures all need special aptitudes to effect, and the larger centres will have attached to the depots scientific men retained to deal with the chemistry and the physiology of the farming operations. The staff for carrying out the manufacturing and commercial work will also require careful choosing: some leavening of the country with the town may be needed, and that is just what the country as a whole requires. The depots will thus become educational centres only less important than the great agricultural colleges and the universities, which will supply the absolutely necessary and invaluable higher staff. From them will flow that stream of sanitary wisdom which will turn the farmer, at the present time grumbling at the inspector and dreading his visits, into an enthusiastic reformer welcoming all the country-side to his fields, water supplies, and cowsheds as adding to the publicity of his perfect methods. The negative habit of just escaping censure and a fine for dirty and diseased stock will give place to the positive one of ever-increasing cleanliness. Coercion will never eradicate

filth from the sloven, but scientific co-operation will devise voluntary and cheerful treatment—largely meaning payment by results—for the establishment of cleanliness in every department of agricultural life. And cleanliness has a money value in domestic economy which has not yet been estimated at its full amount.

I must now turn to the sub-depots at one end of the railway connecting link. If we take the smallest farm in the country, we shall probably find that some of its produce is available for the farmer's own household. Under ideal circumstances every farm should grow as much as possible for its own use. It is the surplus that we must keep our eyes upon—that saleable produce which will bring in cash to meet demands for rent, repairs, and renewals, special articles for scientific farming, and finally the little amenities and luxuries that are some test of well-being and success. There is always room, too, for some spare money in the stocking, or in the Post Office Savings Bank which represents that ancient institution. When we speak of each farm growing its own food we must not forget that co-operation has to some extent altered the

meaning of that phrase. A man may grow enough wheat to make bread for his household without being able to make that wheat into the necessary bread. The wheat might in the old days have been sent as a batch to the mill to be ground, and the owner would have received from the miller such flour "as he thought fit." Or the wheat might have been sold on the market in order that flour or bread might be purchased in its place. But such processes had all the vices of the old system. The cost of cartage of so small a lot, the loss on sale of such a pittance, after all the inconveniences attaching to its growth, made the idea of eating one's home-grown bread a squalid failure. On the other hand, the collection of every such small parcel of wheat and its bulking at the depot is one of the first duties of co-operation. The dealing with the miller both in the sale of the wheat and in the purchase of flour is a simple and satisfactory consequence to be alternated in certain districts when necessary by the erection of a small milling plant. In this latter case, until the ideal wheat is found and in inclement seasons, the purchase of a dry hard foreign or rather colonial sample to blend with the

local crop will be invaluable in view of quality and wholesomeness.

Each farmer, then, having reserved in various ways the food which he requires and has produced, passes on to the little depot in his immediate hamlet the surplus he may have no use for at home. This hamlet depot is the unit in co-operation just as the farm itself is the unit in production. Here the first collection is made, and a preliminary grading in order that the various members of the society may be supplied with the goods which they require out of the surplus of their neighbours. This shop will also be stocked with those articles which the factories at the chief depot have produced, and with those smaller requisites which are in constant demand. The actual stock will be regulated by the needs of the district, for it must not be forgotten that even the smallest store, under the co-operative system, will be watched by the management of the whole and be treated in the most efficient and business-like way.

In every village and small town the same process goes on. The depot provides a collecting-place for the surpluses of the producers and a store for the requirements of buyers of

all kinds. If we were a purely agricultural community there would be no more to be said in this connection except that of course the labourers would obtain under the new auspices a much more attractive and wholesome assortment of goods. But we are not all farmers, and co-operation has to provide for the population which works at hundreds of other trades. The first effect of the new system would be that this population would begin to use home produce instead of that foreign butter, cheese, and fruit which they insist upon receiving now.

IV

THE DEPOT—II

When Co-operation reaches London and the other great centres its problem becomes a purely commercial one. I have traced the produce of the land from the most distant holding in the shires to the great termini and subordinate goods stations which deal with the vast traffic of the country, in and out. My contention has been that these important centres should be made the clearing-houses of the simplified, graded, and well-packed surpluses of the various districts served by the several lines. In a perfected state of Co-operation an altogether different class of goods will reach these termini as compared with those multifarious, infinitely varying items which seek storage or delivery now. Each great line serves special districts, and we may for the moment ignore those areas which are

able to use more than one company. Each line, therefore, will to some extent be identified with certain great county trade-marks, or at least we may expect the broad distinctions of east and west, north and south. It should happen, therefore, that, as far as the cheaper goods are concerned, at least, a few simple arrangements will suffice ; and the food that is most readily at hand will be used by that portion of the city and suburbs which is nearest to the railway. Indeed, a certain local patriotism will spring up, and will inspire the districts of origin to vie with each other in the excellence of their supplies.

The specialities of all the counties will naturally tend to a wider diffusion. But it must be remembered that all the great city depots will be worked under a united organisation. The pitiful and distressing ironies of distribution, represented by such an anomaly and anachronism as Covent Garden, would be quite unnecessary under the altered circumstances. The weary dragging of "gluts" of fruit and vegetables to an unknown fate, which often means an absolutely wasted journey and

spoiled goods, would be put an end to once for all ; for it is one of the axioms of the new system that no single stone of plums or dozen of eggs shall go to an uncertain market or run the gauntlet of the broker's hammer. Let it be remembered that, at its source, produce will be graded, and will be saleable without sample under definite conditions on both sides, and that the actual consignment will need delivery only from station to consignee, the old-world system of blocking central thoroughfares being dispensed with. The management in the great towns will be in hourly touch with the collecting areas ; and all the resources of cold storage, preserving and stocking, combined with an absolute knowledge of the supplies available and the demand for the same, will prevent that miscalculation and blind rushing upon fate which has killed so much agricultural energy. Science will be brought to bear upon the immediate safety of perishable crops at their source in order that speed may not be imperative in the disposal of them.

Up to this point we shall have done nothing in England which is not already being done

by merchants and brokers, chemists and engineers, for the colonist and foreigner. There is, perhaps, some little difference between the positions of the agents for distribution under the new and old systems. A uniformity of treatment under Co-operation will be imperative, and management of the most capable kind will be needed to co-ordinate the various depots and create a regular and steady demand. The Management of Distribution will be sensitive as to qualities, and will be of paramount importance in securing constant and close touch with the producing areas and in advising them upon the vital question of production. There the responsibilities of Co-operation may, under ordinary circumstances, be supposed to end. It would be of no particular advantage to the producer to set up antagonism on the part of the merchant or shopkeeper if they, on their part, acted fairly. The goods on sale in the large towns would be quoted at uniform rates on a definite system. What those rates and what that system should be would be fixed by the management on ordinary business principles. The same questions of detail would have to be de-

cided, as they are at present by all the large producing trades. Decisions would have to be arrived at on such subjects as the wholesale dealer, the retailer, and depots for sale, just as in any other trade, and such decisions would be reached after considering the attitude of the various interested parties. In self-defence the ordinary rights of producers would have to be reserved, even if at the moment Co-operation may be anxious to make use of the present system for the sale of its goods.

But the central commercial principles would be the first care of the Movement, in order that the difficulties of distribution might be dealt with vigorously and with success. No uncertainty as to uniformity, quality, and punctuality could be admitted in the interests of the consumer, and the producer could permit of no tampering with trade-marks. When one contemplates, not perhaps the absolute, but the detailed vastness of the areas of production, as well as the niceties of distribution, it is impossible to deny that the successful future of Co-operation affords opportunities of distinction to commercial geniuses of the finest type.

The tug-of-war between home and foreign produce has still to be felt, and much training has to be gone through and much experience has to be gained before the national questions which will arise need be considered. The commodities which we must be prepared to receive in exchange for our home manufactures will have to be such as from the nature of the case we cannot ourselves produce. But, considering how many things we bring raw from across the seas and return to the places of origin in a manufactured state, need we despair of sending some of our daintiest home-grown and exquisitely treated products to connoisseurs in every quarter of the globe? How the change may be effected from the present system is rather for the foreign producer than for ourselves to decide; and where that foreign producer is only John Bull under another name we may trust his ingenuity to meet the case. The different circumstances of climate and soil will always cause an interchange of produce and commodities among the nations. But it is impossible for us to look upon the paralysis of our own agricultural industry with indifference under the mistaken notion that our

policy is to sell our manufactures and to buy all our food.

To come back, then, to this question of the distribution of food among that portion of the population which does not produce it, I must again emphasise the importance of preventing the distributing centres from being inundated with fruit and other goods at one time and left bare of them at another. The various methods of preserving the products which tend to mature at one time only is as important as is the question of carriage and manufacture. The mere fact of co-operative information will do much to guide such produce to the best markets, but there will always be times when fruit and vegetables should be withheld in the fresh form, and, if they cannot be kept by cold storage, turned into preserved or dried commodities. Here, therefore, is a vast field for talent of a technical kind, in addition to the purely commercial aptitude. And talent of this sort will find occupation under a co-operative system, where it would languish for want of scope under an individual *régime*. We are thus largely using up the middle-man before we discuss his case, and it

will be found that industry and abilities of every kind will find spheres of activity which have scarcely yet been seen in England because Co-operation has not yet had its national chance. The seasons may be entirely ignored by a wise use of glass, and here a knowledge of the market at headquarters may lead to the institution of gardening and farming under glass in suitable places where it has not been in vogue.

I have been taking for granted that our depots would deal with those products which are at present being produced in quantities more or less large. But it must not be overlooked that our acres are not producing by any means the quantities nor the kinds of which they are capable. Our orchards are neither large enough nor numerous enough, nor are the individual trees yielding the crops of which they are capable. I speak merely of the average state of the ordinary farmer and gardener : the superb results of the best and most skilful treatment show what can be made of the rest of the land. What might result from constant consultation between the commercial management and the agricultural and horticultural expert we may

anticipate with pleasure and without misgiving. Surely the whole problem is well worth national study, so that bold and skilful treatment may be applied in large ungrudging measure to the land !

V

THE INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

Agricultural organisation would not have waited so long for its opportunity if the great Industrial Co-operative Societies had not been served from other sources. If their milling departments looked for a good and uniform wheat they went to Liverpool and bought it, and we know that Liverpool is not the best market for our home-grown products. If their provision departments required a butter or a cheese of reasonable and regular qualities they easily procured them, but the articles they purchased could not be said to have a British origin. The societies applied their industrial energies, as employers of labour, to boot-making, rather than to bacon-curing, and if they cast their eyes upon the land it was merely to take their own piece and become one more farmer making the wrong thing in the wrong way.

The farmers and the societies have much to gain from one another, but it is in a direction altogether different from that in which the latter have been looking. Agriculture does not need a few isolated examples of how to treat the labourer and how to produce crops and stock ; nor does co-operation in the industrial centres stand to gain much by individualistic efforts where they are least required. The great societies are expert distributors, and are the natural complements of agricultural co-operation. If they will fully recognise their duties and their opportunities they can at once afford such assistance to it as to make it an assured success forthwith. I have brought the question in the foregoing pages to the point where the surplus produce of the land lies at the great railway termini or urban depots ready for distribution among the dwellers in the towns ; and my contention now is that, if the two million industrial co-operators will distribute among the eight million souls they represent the goods which the country sends up, and will advise the producers as to their needs, and thus guide them in their policies, they will have solved the great problem which is before us at this

time. For the certainty of this use of products, whether by absolute purchase or by sale on commission, will remove many of those difficulties which surround every business movement of this kind in its inception. In the first place the industrial depot would become the agricultural depot in the town of which we have seen the need, and will thus obviate the necessity for capital expenditure in this respect. Secondly, the most capable salesman will be obtained by the same stroke, and we use the word " capacity " not to cover that untruthful palming off of inferior articles at exorbitant prices, but that exact knowledge and thoughtful management which gives confidence to the buyer and does full justice to the articles sold. The older urban activity would thus place at the service of the newer agricultural one that invaluable thing called goodwill, which inheres in the long-established house of repute.

On the other hand, the urban societies will gain equally in another way. Their milk will arrive in perfect condition under the newly instituted and most up-to-date sanitary arrangements that Co-operation will introduce. The best factory-made butter and cheese, the

primest beef, mutton, and bacon, the freshest vegetables and most perfectly graded fruit, will reach them with that British flavour upon them all that still charms us " in spite of all temptation " towards New Zealand and Canada and the States, not to speak of Denmark and France.

Let us now look once more over the whole field. We have discussed the service of motor vans which are to penetrate into the most remote country districts, and have seen the desirability, in connection with these, of turning the village or hamlet shop into a minor depot of co-operation. Now, though this small depot becomes the first exchange or market for the rural commodities themselves, and may even return to the farms which supply it the butter and cheese which have been made at the factory from their own milk, the most obvious use of the reconstituted shop will be to supply those other commodities which are not obtainable from the land itself, and many of which, indeed, are not grown in Britain at all. Tea and sugar, clothing and utensils are the " products " of the shipowner and manufacturer, just as corn, meat, and milk are the products

of the homeland. No agency can supply these to the rural districts more efficiently than the Industrial Co-operative Societies can. A more direct and valuable source of supply could scarcely be conceived. The famine in foreign and manufactured articles which is so notorious in the country districts is equalled by the dearth of the fresher vegetable and animal foods which the town dweller needs so urgently. A brisk exchange between town and country in this respect would be an untold boon to both. This is a subject, or a problem, which outsiders of many kinds endeavour to discuss and solve in a variety of ways. Because Canadian apples and American cheeses find their easy way into our urban co-operative stores, and into still more improper places in our rural districts, certain enthusiasts try to persuade us to legislate against these very desirable things, and to make the consumption of our inadequate supplies of British apples and cheeses, like the muffins in Dickens's famous society, compulsory. But, in fact, goodwill and genuine co-operation met on the part of the agricultural interest by common sense and a willingness to fall in with commercial guidance,

are all that are required to stay the too rapid influx of colonial and foreign goods.

If we look at the problem in some detail we may inquire into what divisions the wholesale departments of both industrial and agricultural Co-operation fall. Both societies need the ordinary foreign goods which have entered into the economics of every household, whether urban or rural. These goods, therefore, can be bought at one stroke for both organisations, and can be distributed as easily to a village shop as to the store in a factory town—that is, as easily as a stroke of the pen will do it : the railway rates and the needs of rural distribution we have already discussed. Household utensils, crockery and furniture, as well as all those appliances and goods which are needed equally in town and country, can also be obtained and supplied by a single agency or two agencies acting in concert. Again, there are other articles which, although some are special to the land and some to streets and houses, are made by the same manufacturer, and can be invoiced on the same sheet. In all these things town and country will do better if they act together and assist one another by bulking their orders and by

combining their depots and their arrangements for conveyance. Thus to the obvious convenience of town and country a certain machinery of distribution is set a-working, and, now, is it to be supposed for a moment that the impossible will happen, and that, after the channels have been made, reciprocity only will be withheld, and that a flow and reflow of respective products will fail to follow? Every economic law demands that the natural activity of the two sides of the people should be allowed full play. The town, the hardworked factory or mill hand, is entitled to all the wholesome and appetising commodities that the land will yield: the country, on the other hand, the ill-housed and ill-paid labourer, has a right to participate in the benefit of those imported and manufactured goods which are carried to every other market in the world.

I should be the last to recommend a hand-to-mouth management to any farmhouse or cottage in the shires, and shall be glad to see the end of that laborious weekly journey to a distant market for the purpose of selling a few items of produce and purchasing the materials for a very scanty bill-of-fare. The inter-

penetration of town and country is a necessity that must be secured and a privilege that must be granted before either party to the balanced intercourse can be considered sound. Many benefits besides those which I have mentioned will be called for, but I am speaking at present of what the old co-operative societies can do and might receive. It is impossible to over-estimate the reflex benefit which will accrue to the rural population in such a co-operation as this between the meadow and the street. Every successful business venture requires some certain outlook, some assured turnover, to remove the risk of failure. That basis being secured, it is possible to perfect the machinery and increase the trade so as to give to the output improvements in quality and reductions in price. The town only can afford this extraneous demand which is to prevent the agriculture of our country living upon itself. But this valuable client having been secured in, let us say, the Industrial Co-operative Societies, the result will be that the quality of the whole series of products will be raised. I have shown on earlier pages, to some extent, how this will come to pass. The old but scarcely-

to-be-forgotten samples of sour butter, rancid bacon, stale vegetables, and coarse meat will be eliminated, and the country labourer himself even will participate in the improved conditions and begin to enjoy what he had formerly just passively assimilated. The temptations of the ale-house are often but another way of stating the repulsions of the home, and town and country will benefit equally when they both receive the kindly fruits of the earth in such a form that they can enjoy them to the full extent.

VI

JOINT PURCHASE AND THE CENTRAL BUREAU

I have now discussed in general terms the objects and methods of Co-operation, but the questions which have been considered are not those which are usually undertaken as its preliminary steps. The foundation of factories and the combined use of traction, which are involved in the more advantageous sale of all kinds of produce, deal with vast monetary interests, but they do not appear to be, in the minds of those who are practically introducing this great movement, of the same preliminary character as is the joint purchase of the goods which are used in agriculture. We may to some extent understand why this should be so. The nervousness and doubt which oppress the best of us when our business concerns are being discussed by others are

not so likely to be aroused when the question is one merely of buying better and buying cheaper the ordinary requirements of a farm. What are some of the chief anxieties and difficulties which the farmer has to face? To sow a seed that does not germinate, or whose shoot appears above the ground with a countenance quite unlike the family one that was expected, or, perhaps, accompanied by a bodyguard of weeds, is desperately disappointing. And to pay freight on so-called feeding stuffs and manures or fertilisers when one is really doing so on foreign and injurious substances is what many an honest farmer has had to suffer in past years. Again, to purchase tools, implements, and machinery which may or may not be satisfactory, and will certainly not be cheap, runs away with money that can ill be spared.

The preliminary, even if not the fundamental or most important work, then, which co-operation undertakes is the joint purchase of all these necessaries. Joint action here enables business to be done on a large scale, and a big business empowers the districts to obtain expert advice, wholesale prices, and perfect qualities. Each separate area would

gain enormously by this joint purchase, but a still further gain is made by the union of the whole into one federation. When the national system of Co-operation is complete its ramifications will be in every nook and corner of the country, and some of its branches will tap every local source of special supply. Under Co-operation in its perfect form the whole body gains the advantage which any single branch may procure, and it thus becomes fairly clear that the movement from its inception requires a central bureau for collecting information upon business matters and making it available for all the members. Openness and frankness on the part of all are absolutely essential; indeed, Co-operation calls for more than these, for anxiety and enthusiasm in making the benefits which are discovered by one applicable to all.

It is necessary at this point to refer to a danger which Co-operation ought to avoid. It is the risk with which undue competition has infected us all in the past, but which the genius of joint working should easily be able to escape. The legitimate aims of combination are to secure good instead of bad quality, purity as against adulteration, and the same

price to the poor man as to the rich. It should be no purpose primarily to compete against those honest dealers and manufacturers who have built up a reputation for quality; these firms have been upholding the interests of the farmers before Co-operation came to their aid. And no partial system of collective working can adequately satisfy the genius of the movement. Every worthy and honest firm whose business is destroyed by the competition of the new agriculture will indicate a failure of the true spirit of co-operation, and be a flaw in its working. From the highest point of view, therefore, and in the best interests of all, it is most desirable that the wishes of the old high-class houses should be studied; their system of working through agents or retail houses should be respected, and every effort made to combine acquiescence in their policy with the well-being of the ultimate users. For we urge once more upon those involved in such discussion the undoubted fact that co-operation and the old-established wholesale house are fighting the common enemies of both—the purveyors of the untrue seed, the adulterated manure, and the unsound implement. Some mutual understanding based

on appreciation of the ultimate aim should be arrived at without delay.

Particularly is this cessation of strife necessary when we consider that the savings which may be effected even by the most extreme measures of competition in the purchase of goods are almost negligible compared to the financial results which may be obtained from joint manufacture, grading, and sale. Admitting that we receive perfect quality from both sources, who can estimate the annual saving upon a tool that may last twenty years or upon some speciality which has been arrived at after perhaps years of expensive research? The genius of true Co-operation is generosity, not meanness, and gratitude for patient working, not the grudging of a reasonable recompense.

The consideration of the central bureau brings us to the inception of Co-operation itself in the homeland. It began here after certain thoughtful people had watched the efforts of other countries in the matter. It appeared to these students that a system which was doing such splendid work elsewhere could not be altogether out of place in Ireland. The labours of Sir Horace Plunkett in the sister

isle are too well known to need more than the warmest acknowledgment in these pages. The needs of that country were so vital that they obscured the no less deadly nature of the ailment in the more financially robust partners in the union. But it soon dawned upon the minds of thinkers here that if the methods of Co-operation could be applied in Ireland with success, there could be no reason why England, Wales, and Scotland should not use it too. And so during the last few years here also Co-operation has—cautiously indeed, but very really—made a beginning. And now the accomplished facts should guide us safely in the development of a complete conception of what the whole movement may become. I cannot too often emphasise the fact that this movement is the centre of many other agencies, all of which will contribute to the revivification of our agricultural industry, and, as a centre, it will exert a unifying influence and will prevent those separate failures which must inevitably overtake isolated efforts, however useful.

The work in England began upon the initiative of Mr. W. L. Charleton, who was supported in his efforts by Lord Wenlock.

Upon the amalgamation of the British Agricultural Organisation Society with the National Agricultural Union, Mr. R. A. Yerburgh became president of the Agricultural Organisation Society, and his activity in the good cause was everywhere evident. And now Mr. Yerburgh is dead, and I question whether there are many figures who will be so sorely missed by all sections and parties as that of this gracious Englishman who unfortunately was in Germany when the war broke out. If ability combined with courtesy and kindliness could have persuaded the people concerned, Mr. Yerburgh and Sir Horace Plunkett would have succeeded. Mr. Yerburgh is dead, and the new policy of coercion is crude. May the spirit of the friends of the old effort still remain in the true Co-operation which I trust is at hand!

I should like, with profound respect, to urge upon those who are the pioneers in agricultural co-operation the urgent necessity for turning resolutely to the other side of the problem, and endeavouring to promote milk depots, dairies, factories, and grading establishments in every county in the land. Much preliminary work will be required in mapping

out the areas, estimating requirements, and securing the assistance of experienced business men and organisations, in addition to the professors and experts who are helping the work now. The spirit of competition and friction need not be aroused. The same channels of distribution which are being used can be used still, and the "middleman," who seems to be so great a terror to the isolated buyer or seller, will become the valuable servant and adviser of Co-operation if he is given the chance.

The Agricultural Organisation Society, then, existed to make the benefits of Co-operation familiar throughout the country. Supported by voluntary contributions and small affiliation fees from the Societies which it assisted in founding, its limited funds were used for the sole purpose of teaching the agricultural community the way to go to work. Its officers might well be appalled by the mass of ignorance which it was their business to overcome, and by the vast area which must be covered before the whole system was in working order and operating in every village and hamlet in the land. But caution and safety were the watchwords of Co-operation,

and its policy was to proceed so carefully that failure through hurried and thoughtless action should not sully the good name and impede the progress of the idea. However, in spite of the need for caution, the labourers in this field were far too few, and the heroic efforts of voluntary subscribers and workers were supplemented by State help. Even this was useless, and in my humble opinion the effort has failed largely because of agricultural conditions. But before commenting upon these conditions, I will complete a somewhat more detailed survey of what Co-operation means.

VII

MILK

The first problem which a perfected system of Co-operation is set to solve is that of milk. Hitherto those students who have discussed the question have considered it perhaps too exclusively from the point of view of municipal depots and the saving of infant life. The destruction of children by dirty and diseased milk, and the failure to save them due to the substitution of cow's milk for that of mother's without the necessary adaptation of it to the purpose, have concentrated the valuable efforts of the medical fraternity upon the provision of special farms for producing and special shops for distributing this prime necessity of life. But the question is altogether larger and more important than this partial attempt, however good it may be; the national campaign that is being set on foot

will include this fundamental department of the babies, but will treat our milk supply generally in a much more comprehensive way.

Milk, as I have already said elsewhere, will never be produced in perfection by an Act of Parliament, nor can municipal undertakings obtain it by direct farming operations so well as by the adoption of another course. Suppose that all the municipal authorities were to undertake the management of their own farms, they could scarcely compel every inhabitant to use their produce and pass by that of the independent farmers who might be prepared to purvey equal qualities at, perhaps, lower rates. The necessities of the case call for an entirely different mode of treatment—one which has been largely overlooked in the consideration of the matter. The only system which can at one and the same time do justice to the whole farming fraternity and to the urban dweller in this urgent subject is complete co-operation. And this solution of our difficulties cannot be thoroughly understood unless we spend some care and time in properly estimating what these difficulties are.

The points which need to be studied with the deepest care and managed with the utmost vigilance may be summarised thus: The animal itself and its treatment, both as to food and housing; its attendants and the utensils which they use; the immediate treatment of the milk with a view to its transport in a wholesome state; the arrangements for distribution. It is impossible for me to give adequate technical consideration to all the most urgent items in the furnishing of wholesome milk to every household in the land; but I cannot avoid touching on the salient features of the problem, seeing that, in my opinion, Co-operation only can fully deal with them. Taking the cow herself first, it is only too certain that a very large number in our herds are not in a fit state of health to supply wholesome milk at all. Now it is of considerable value that we should have inspectors, and should give a small compensation to the owner where it is necessary to slaughter diseased cattle. But here the owner is naturally on the defensive, and legal pressure is often required to bring about the destruction of tuberculous cows. To attempt to compass by

pressure on individuals wholesome feeding and sanitary hygienic measures would be utterly futile.

Co-operation looks at what is desirable with altogether different eyes. By its system of insurance, to which I shall refer more fully later, the whole body bears the brunt of individual losses ; but, much more important, the risk of contamination of a whole society's milk puts the question of health upon an entirely altered footing. The medical inspection which is forced upon an unwilling or indifferent individual, impregnable in his ignorance of veterinary science, is the very first of the voluntary activities in which a community of interests engages. Its stock of milkers must be as sound as bells, and the bills of health of the mothers must be absolutely clean ; the very large yield must not be the supreme object, but must give place to general quality of milk and the robust constitution of every member of the herd. To perform the act of milking without first washing both udder and hands would, in true co-operation, be considered an offence against one's comrades ; and any indifference or cold-blooded attempt to ignore those local

affections of the cow, which at present only too often poison our milk, would be treated by summary expulsion from the body of farmers.

In all these personal but exquisitely needful acts of watchfulness and care, a co-operative area would be under the guidance of those expert managers of whom we are gradually securing a supply. The regular and daily treatment of the food and water supplies, the removal of manure and disinfecting of sheds and yards, the cleaning of the milking utensils and the vessels for storing and packing, would be matters of the simplest but most effective hourly routine. I desire to emphasise the difference in all these matters between voluntary fellow-workers, aiming at the best system that science can suggest, and that attempt at coercive inspection which the best of other plans must depend upon. Professor Melick,* in the chapter called "Writing to Patrons," gives a list of some of the points which the cowkeeper should have ever before him. He says :—

1. The milk haulers must keep their wagons free from dirt and filth.

* "Dairy Laboratory Guide." Constable. 5s.

2. The cow stables should be kept cleaned and ventilated.

3. The feeding and bedding of cows must be done after milking, as the dust contains bacteria that will spoil the milk.

4. The milkers must not get anything in the pail from the cow's udder but milk. To aid in this matter a damp cloth may be used to advantage in wiping the cow's udder before milking, and the first stream from each teat discarded. [The udder should be thoroughly washed.]

5. In straining the milk use a double strainer-covered pail. The common strainer is not sufficient to take out the fine particles of dirt. Milk should be cooled to as low temperature as possible immediately after milking.

6. After thoroughly washing all pails, pans, strainers, cans, etc., with good washing powder, they must be scalded with boiling water to destroy the harmful germs.

7. The skim milk should never be left standing in the cans. It is best to empty the cans, wash them, and scald with hot water or steam.

8. Fresh milk should be cooled before mixing with other milk.

These directions, it will be understood, are intended for those farmers from whom the milk company buys its milk. They are not nearly as drastic or as comprehensive as an energetic co-operative district would suggest for its own area. And here I may interpose with the statement that the new Co-operative Land Holding Societies may design the cow-sheds and dairies of their members on the most perfectly hygienic principles. Many of our old farmsteads will need some very thorough emptying of dust-collecting material and much re-organisation of drainage arrangements. But pure milk will bear easily all the expenditure needed to provide it.

Now, when we consider carefully the many requirements of a perfect dairy farm, can any motive but general loyalty to each other be trusted to carry out the fundamental precautions and the other hundred and one rules that are needed to convey milk from a healthy udder to the lips of the little children in the town ?

Anyone who is sceptical on the subject of

the risks we run in the matter of milk, and of the marvellous possibilities open before societies who desire to reach the proud position of providing a perfect supply, should study such a book as Mr. John Spargo's "The Commonsense of the Milk Question."* In it will be found an array of painful facts, which show in detail—what is generally known, and yet overlooked through sheer fatalism—the horrors of the old-fashioned farmyard treatment and the middle passage of the present day. The wholesale deaths of our infants, the spread of consumption and many other diseases, the repulsiveness of what should be an appetising food, the wonders of scientific and cleanly treatment—all these things are here for those who have the nerve to face facts and the pluck to work patiently at possibilities.

The Co-operative system only can deal with the matter if we are determined to save from pollution the whole country rather than a mere percentage of the people. If Co-operation shows how the work can be done, the law will readily hand over to Co-operation the licence to do it, and will withhold from the squalid,

* Macmillan & Co. 6s. 6d.

ignorant cowkeeper the right to sell his inferior product to his fellow citizens. Perhaps I need not again make it clear that in urging this duty upon Co-operation I am not belittling those model farmers who have acted as pioneers in the production of perfect dairy products. But, while they may still reach their select band of customers for their goods, Co-operation will make it its business to see that no one in the length and breadth of the land shall be able to receive milk in any but a clean and wholesome state. When every county has set on foot its series of units, directed in essentials by the district professors and managed by a properly educated staff, the outlaws who still retain tuberculous cows in filthy sheds, to be milked into dirty pails by unclean hands, will be quietly "put down" by a stronger hand than that of Dickens's alderman. Co-operation has no greater work to do than this, and I hope soon to see a national movement towards this end.

No single individual in town or country who is at present earning a livelihood in this trade need lose his business or his post if everyone will heartily fall in with the attempt

to attain cleanliness and health. But there are, I fear, outlaws in the distribution as well as in the production of milk, and with these, of course, no terms can be made. The "modification" of milk is of a slightly different order from the question we are now discussing, and may have to be retained by municipalities until it, too, becomes a national system under co-operation. Pasteurisation and sterilisation may still be necessary, especially at the difficult seasons of the year, but the competition among producers should ever be to see how nearly they can dispense with all artificial cleansing and preserving by preventing dirt and disease from entering into this life-giving product at all.

We are often met with the objection that milk will not bear the extra expense which purity will put upon it. And as long as dirty, diseased milk is allowed to push itself at low prices there is some foundation for this objection. But even at the present time there is no difficulty in obtaining full prices where a good and wholesome article is sold. Bad milk is dear at any price, and must be made a penal offence, as it is indeed at pre-

sent in extreme cases; and the law must help the ignorant to understand that the cost of cleanliness must be found, because the State will no longer permit the poisoning of its children.

VIII

MILK AND ITS PRODUCTS—I

The demand for whole milk in Great Britain is so vast that the energies of Co-operation must be directed to it in the first instance, and only to its products subsequently. Other things being equal, it will pay the farmer better to sell his milk as milk rather than as butter and cheese. I have directed attention to the opportunity which lies before Co-operation for seizing the trade in milk, because Parliament can never compass pure rich milk by legislation alone. The law can at its best only secure fair play for those who endeavour to purvey this article of the best quality and free from those impurities which are so disgusting as well as injurious to health. It can punish those who offend against all the canons of decency and honesty, but pure milk will not be obtained in that way.

I have already referred to the close connection which must exist between the individual himself, the co-operative unit, and the State or, at least, local government. I shall be compelled to refer to this point continually because, for a perfect condition of our stock, it is imperative that joint action should reach from the most active and intelligent of individualists up to the county or provincial and collegiate authorities. Milk production, as Mr. Dunlop shows, depends upon milk records ; records lead to the elimination of the poorer animals ; adequate continuation of the finest strains follows from the survival of the best bulls, and satisfactory arrangements in this respect can only come from very careful selection made in the interests of all. A happy-go-lucky method in this respect will bring success to no department of stock-rearing and Co-operation should make thoughtful breeding one of the first provisions of its policy.

Deterioration has been the unhappy accompaniment of poverty in connection with the breeding of our stock during the last fifty years. This is not to say that wonders have not been performed by the great breeders,

but that the rank and file, the average farmers, have been unable to carry out any of the first principles which underlie success. It is here that Co-operation steps in to save agriculture from that final descent into Avernus down which the earlier steps have been so easy. In true Co-operation quality of stock will be the first care. The immature and the second-rate will be passed by in favour of the finest specimens in the herds, and the poorest farmer will be assisted to fall into line in order that the produce of the whole community may be kept up to a level which will give it a prominent place in the market.

This is imperative for success, but I breathe another pious wish which is not so. As careful selection in breeding towards one particular aim cannot well be applied over an unwieldy area, it is hoped that the various groups of counties will set up a healthy rivalry, and institute specialities which will impart variety in perfection. The fashions or types already prevalent need only to become fixed, and made incumbent upon all, to establish strains that, after supplying the home needs, will leave a surplus of prime beasts for export to every part of the world.

It seems almost to follow that, the fundamental principle of high breeding having been established, the produce of the herds will receive better attention than may appear due to the milk of cheap cattle issuing from poverty-stricken farms and dirty stalls. The standard of quality in milkers includes quality in milk, and it seems natural that the best methods should be applied to the transfer of such milk to the population using it. The best prospect of profit assuredly lies in the carriage of this fine milk, clean and uncontaminated, into the towns, after the villages themselves have reserved their needful share of it. The joint activity of the Industrial Co-operative Societies as users and the agricultural units as producers will be the best combination to establish the most effective transfer of perfect milk to urban dwellers. Increase of statutory power over worthless qualities and vigilance of inspection are the parts which the State will have to play.

But all the milk which is available cannot conveniently be disposed of in this way, and if it could there is always the possibility of increasing very largely the quantity of milk

produced, by scientific methods of cropping and feeding. It is in the adequate treatment of this surplus milk that the chance of our retaining some of the millions that go abroad depends. We are largely shut up to our own fresh milk because our active neighbours have not yet invented a system of supplying it to our tables of a better quality than our home supply. This makes it all the more shameful that we have not earlier addressed ourselves resolutely to the provision of better milk. The little slum babies need it more urgently even than their richer neighbours in order to resist the other evil influences of their surroundings.

Two facts are only too painfully familiar to us in connection with milk products. If we go to some large hotel or institution even in the heart of the country, we find on inquiry that the butter provided is of Danish or French origin, because the local article is of so uncertain and irregular a quality that it cannot be relied on. If, on the other hand, we call at some farmhouse, even where the conditions of tenure and rent are at their best, we shall probably find the butter uneatable, ill-flavoured and ill-made. Where the conditions are

poverty and an uncertain tenure, the results as written in butter are indescribable.

To these conditions and results we have to apply the one panacea—Co-operation. The first case needs the educational side of it just as surely as the second requires the beneficent influences of joint action and the bank. In my demand for improved stock I have done all that some authorities ask towards quality of milk and butter. In my own opinion we have only begun the investigation of the needs when we have obtained the right cow. The proper feeding of the herd is all-important when we come to the flavour of the product. I go so far as to ask that the manurial properties on the one hand and the cheapness of the food on the other should be neglected. The general quality of our home product and its reputation in the market are at present so bad that we cannot afford to look at any question but the establishment of a finely flavoured butter unequalled by any foreign sample. To reach this we must, in my humble opinion, adhere rigorously to the policy of the finest stock, fed, as regards material other than grass and hay, on the leguminous crops. How is it that even a fine butter falls

off in flavour during the summer? Simply because the feeding stuffs, the pea meal and the bean meal, which are a necessity in winter, are looked upon as unnecessary in the summer months. If flavour is to be kept all the year round, the treatment of the food must be as careful at one season as at another.

Presuming that the stock has been secured and the members of the co-operative unit have arranged to feed it properly and upon the system recommended by the best advisers, there remain some serious details to consider. If cheese be the common industry of the district the product should be so treated as to improve its position in the market, and give to its quality a uniformity which few agricultural commodities have at the present time. Unquestionably, if the stock and its feeding be attended to, the varieties of cheese in the present home industries will not be so manifold; and it may be possible at some central depot to perform the part of grading and selection with manifest benefit to the prices realised. But even without doing more than this in certain cases of old-established cheese-makers who do their work at home, it is possible in such a district as we are con-

sidering to establish a cheese-making dairy to deal with the milk available from those members of the society who do not manufacture. In the interests of sanitation, such a dairy in every suitable district is a necessity. No small farm dairy can be expected to carry out all the scientific precautions and operations which are necessary to perfect cheese-making; and, where uniformity is so imperative as it is here, nothing but a central establishment can at once deal out justice to individual farmers and provide a pure, rich, wholesome product to the general public.

In butter the problem is slightly different. Butter may be "blended"—I dislike the word, because I dislike the operation—but cheese may not. It is perfectly possible, therefore, for the various scattered farmers to send to the factory butter made at home, to be bulked with other similar supplies from scattered farms and made into a useful and saleable sample. If all the provisions as to stock and feeding be honestly carried out the blending will not add much uniformity; if the demands of the society, on the other hand, are outraged, expulsion of the disloyal member may be the only final course to adopt. But

the best method of all is for the members to send their milk, treated as instructed, to the district creamery, there to be made into butter of which each farmer may be proud. For loyal Co-operation admits of a double pride if it succeed in establishing a national reputation for its goods—a pride in the individual skill and care which is a fundamental necessity, and a still more noble pride in that loyalty of each to all which is the basis of all social worth.

IX

MILK AND ITS PRODUCTS—II

It is commonly asserted that whole milk pays to produce and that butter does not. The very truth that lies on the surface of this assertion makes it more difficult to get at the other truths that lie below it. For one of the most dangerous of all economic actions is that universal striving for some particular limited market and the consequent neglect of other outlets which supervene. In this individual instance of whole milk the result of a one-product policy is peculiarly dangerous, for it causes a stagnation, an absence of competition, in those other products for which we have been depending far too completely on a foreign supply. The only real and scientific antidote to this blind system is in co-operation and more co-operation. The agricultural interests of a district should be

pooled in view of the milk question more completely than for any other purpose, and the district itself should be of no meagre area, but should be as generous and as broad as local feeling and county "pride and prejudice" will permit.

For take some agricultural area convenient for administration, and look at the necessities and the possibilities of the case. There will be within the area large towns to be supplied with milk, butter and cheese, and these are the important customers whose tastes and requirements must be met in the first instance. I have already discussed the situation which arises here, and may take it as proved that for two reasons the communities, urban and rural, are equally shut up to co-operation: the first, by its demand for pure, clean, guaranteed milk, which the districts only can supply in quantities sufficient for all without a multiplicity of detail in inspection and freights; the second by the impossibility of satisfying the just demands of the towns except through the joint employment of the finest expert services obtainable.

Now a large primary demand of this kind for whole milk cannot be met except out of

the entire produce of the district concerned. I will concede for a moment that this demand could be met by half the farmers in the area. The extrusion of the other half would set up a competition that would injure the towns in the matter of quality, and cause a loss to the farmers in that of price. Purity and richness would both suffer, and the cost of unnecessary detective inspection would be a dead loss to all interested. The agricultural district as a whole, therefore, would benefit most by a single united effort to do the urban trade in milk efficiently and well.

This involves a surplus for other purposes of half the milk produced in the area. I neglect for the moment the domestic supplies of the farmers concerned. They have a production of double the quantity that can be sold at good prices in the whole state. Profits depend on the successful turning of this moiety into cash. The question then is not whether as high a price can be obtained in the form of butter or cheese as in that of milk, but whether a loss can be avoided which would reduce the profit on the latter. If the whole of the milk is sent down to the co-operative depot and sub-depots the butter and

different kinds of cheese become by-products, which can be varied to meet the demands of the market. If the skim milk is not required for the cheaper cheeses it may be returned for different farm uses when the delivery of new milk is made. And this milk may come back once more to the depots at a later date in the form of fat pigs or fowls.

It is a cheering fact that co-operation is using up as managers the well-trained students of the agricultural colleges. The Midland Institute, for instance, cannot supply the demands made upon it in this respect. The biggest care of all these managers will always be the complete organisation of their districts, in order that such a thing as waste may be unknown either of labour or of goods. It may be that from the distant farms the surplus will be delivered in the form of home-made butter, which we trust will be prepared under the explicit directions of the manager upon a uniform system which will obviate the need for "blending." Those who love this method should study its objectionable possibilities in the Annual Report of the Intelligence Division of the Board of Agriculture. I will give one or two extracts from

it :—" A sample of butter consigned from France to a large dairy company in London was found to contain cocoanut oil and paraffin wax." "Nine applications for names for these mixtures (butter and milk) had been received before the end of the year." " Many persons are still being victimised by hawkers who sell margarine as butter. The persons who engage in this business usually have no fixed address and no stock in trade. Their practice is to make up margarine into rolls, hire a cart or other vehicle, and pose as dairy farmers selling their own produce." A firm which had been using margarine until their source of supply had been stopped turned on to other adulterants, and the Report states : " The examination of the premises which followed the issue of this warrant showed a complete plant for condensing milk, a quantity of condensed separated milk and large amounts of foreign and colonial butter, in addition to various appliances for blending and working butter."

Co-operation should at once in its early years adopt a system quite above suspicion in matters such as this. The managers have difficulties to contend with already in the

treachery of their own members at times. I visited one dairy in which a member had had his milk tested in the morning and filled it up with water in the evening, because he thought it safe to do so. For the work before us one policy only can succeed—that of establishing the finest qualities by the best methods throughout, starting from the breeding and feeding of the stock before reaching the manipulation of the produce. How different is the mean spirit of the member just alluded to from that shown in the duet by Lord Belper and Mr. Cope at the agricultural inquiry. "We aim," said his lordship, "at giving the highest possible education that can be got in this country . . . not only in all forms of buttermaking, but, I think, the teachers of the college make the best cheese in Europe." "I think so," said Mr. Cope. It is by such co-operation with the colleges that the depots will succeed.

I do not wish to be misunderstood even in the question of county brands of uniform quality in big bulks. I urge the treatment of surplus milk in factories and dairies as far as it is convenient to do so. It is clear that it is only after the milk has reached the factory

that the manager can say how much of it is required for his whole milk demand. Some of it at least therefore must be treated upon a systematic method of manufacture, because a surplus of some kind must enter into the scheme. The greater volume of milk which it is possible to take to the factory the better ; all the plans for its use can be laid down with greater certainty and economy. But concerning those special farms from which it may not be possible to draw the daily supply of milk, and concerning those others who may have or think they have some speciality in manipulation and success in results, it should be clearly understood that in these cases also the co-operative depot holds out the best prospect of financial advantage. The manager is ever in touch with the best buyers, and can without difficulty dispose of every item, however small, of rich and delicate qualities that deserve a better price even than that for which the depot may be famed. Indeed, expert influence will not be exhausted while it enables the brighter intellects among the farmers to study quality and feeding of stock so faithfully as to bring out from time to time new and exquisite creams, butters,

and cheeses to startle the uniformity of the market with. I urge large co-operative measures towards uniformity and the seizing of the market in our very largest centres of trade. But side by side with this I hope to see a continued effort on the part of all towards better and better results, and a systematic method of placing in the right hands those special and dainty productions which may issue from the Co-operative undertaking.

X

MEAT

To the student of Co-operation the subject of meat presents some special characteristics. These are more particularly the questions of insurance and the special precautions required in the position and management of the depot. They will, however, be more conveniently discussed in connection with the general treatment of meat by Co-operation. Like all our live stock, cattle under true Co-operation must be dealt with from the primary point of view of breeding, and the elimination of the unfit by careful selection and the rigorous demand for maturity in the parent stock. Although Co-operation cannot as yet be said to have even begun to show its face in the finest meat markets, some very interesting experiments are taking place in

the interchange of valuable breeding sorts by means of its action. Of course, in matters of this kind, it is most desirable that the various colleges should be consulted. The whole movement should be made to coincide with the best expert knowledge obtainable; and this, on the other hand, has much to gain from the testing of methods over a wide range. Co-operation can do in large masses and over important areas what even the most enlightened of individuals can do only to a very limited extent. And it can bring about results with which the efforts of an energetic farmer here and there are altogether incommensurate. For there must always be a deep difference of objective between the two. The districts wish to help each other and to establish a better system, a finer set of breeds, and a more satisfactory national supply. The individual is naturally more intent on proving his superiority over his neighbour, and aims at obtaining a specially high price for his limited stock. There will be, as I have often said, room for the very highest class of breeders even after co-operation has made its mark. But

the aim of co-operation will always be to make their best knowledge common to all the members, so as to bring about a uniformity of perfection and an absolute disappearance of worthless, ill-bred and badly nurtured beasts.

It is obvious, therefore, that a complete whole-hearted interchange of prime cattle among the societies will do more than a heavy money outlay to improve breeding. A systematic carrying out of the plan will in no long time bring about a revolution in the quality of the herds throughout the country. The work honestly and frankly performed will do away with that disastrous breeding from the immature and the third-rate, which has been due to poverty alone. When a unit owns the prize cattle the poorest member gains equally with the richest, and when all combine a speedy and general raising of quality will take place. All, however, gain in the altogether new and better average of the produce throughout the district. Meat becomes a noted article in the Co-operative area, and little by little the homes in the whole land become supplied with

food which is both more inviting and more nutritious.

Co-operation has been useful in providing central auction marts in districts which had been raided by the inevitable middleman. But, I may ask, who was to buy the fat stock if in the past the middleman had not placed his services at the disposal of the farmer? The dilemma of the farmer should never be lost sight of. Unless he combines with others to produce big lots of uniform quality he has no power, from the very nature of the case, either to obtain low railway rates or to reach the best markets. Someone must work for him as an individual and perform all the various acts that are necessary to reach the consumer. It is obvious, therefore, that someone must be paid for carrying through these operations in the expensive method of detail which the present individualistic system requires.

The auction mart, therefore, does something to reduce this expenditure and reach the larger buyers direct. If it once be found that the stock is worth a journey, it will soon attract those wholesale dealers into whose hands the

cattle collected in detail by the older method eventually falls. Assuming that a sufficient number of real competitors attend, the prices represent the full value, in that form and at that place, of the commodity without the deduction which represented the profit of the local collector. But an auction mart for live cattle can never be considered as the last word in Co-operation. We have to allow for two very serious defects in its working. As to the sale itself, much depends upon the accident of attendance, and, after a certain demand has been supplied, great risk attends the obtaining of adequate prices for the whole of the lots offered.

But a still greater objection may be raised to the sale of fat stock at all by active Co-operative Districts. The bidders for stock are not the real buyers of meat. They are the butchers who have still to sell the carcases in the wholesale market, and they are obliged to remove their purchases of live stock to distant slaughterhouses, much to the detriment of the meat. There is no better place for the abattoir than the central collecting depot of the cattle district itself. It is impor-

tant to remember that dead meat is what is required by the large urban buyers. The health of our cities requires very stringent regulations on this score. The abattoir is found to be dangerous to health in thickly populated places; its true situation, therefore, is as near as possible to the collecting ground, as long as a sufficient area is cleared to make the trade large enough to bear expenses and secure the lowest rates of freight.

Humanity and health both demand the reduction of the long railway passages of stock. A humane and healthful system can more readily be established where each limited district addresses itself to this painful but apparently necessary department of our food supply. The resources of our motor services are only now being tapped, but science cannot fail to suggest the simplest and best method of dealing with these freights of fat stock. The numerous by-products of the abattoir, too, need very careful handling, and a group of minor trades would be the natural result in most districts. To all these things Co-operation lends its ready help, and the

leather trade, certain unsavoury but useful factories, and the preparation of fertilisers would all become useful activities of the neighbourhood.

I cannot too often reiterate that the main work of a certain area, such as this of producing fine meat, should never be treated as the sole business carried on by Co-operation. Such a trade is always the nucleus, that which bears the brunt of the initial expenditure, but should never be allowed to monopolise the whole of the interest. The area will naturally use the combination for joint-purchase, and for the grading and distribution of all other produce. In this particular case it must, however, be remembered that the actual slaughter-house may have to be, probably will be, removed from the other work, and be kept aloof from the usual depot for the reasons given.

The meat produced in this perfect way, and in prime condition because of the arrangements made, will not require to undergo the objectionable routine of the meat market. The arrangements which we discussed on an earlier page for receiving at the various

railway termini the goods which come up from the country will be required to complete the whole scheme of co-operative working. The manager at the distributing end will have an arduous but ever-mellowing task in getting into business relationships with the best buyers.

Here, again, there will be no need to discard the wholesale channels of trade. All that is required is that sufficient retail establishments be undertaken to set the price at which the retail trade must be done. There is no scarcity of managers of great capacity who are able to set a uniform rate to whole towns, and to see that the co-operative producer gets full value for the stock which he has reared and fattened. Such a man will make arrangements for the transmission of meat in the most cleanly, attractive, and sanitary way.

The whole question of tuberculosis will be settled with infinite ease under a system such as this. A few years will stamp out the disease, if there be no tampering with the scourge. The medical attack will not be confined to dead meat, but will be carried into the milch cow area.

Patience and strict science work wonders in matters even more difficult than this is, and Co-operation should hasten to assure the butcher that it at least has no wish to force upon him the risk of tuberculous meat.

Honesty is always the best policy, but it pays nowhere so well as in Co-operation. An individual may obtain a good name for regularity and purity of goods and the quality which comes of the best treatment. But a single person cannot establish a name for these things so quickly or so fully, because he cannot possibly attack the problem of a good repute so effectively as a large organised body can.

In this department of meat everyone knows the difference between joints from a prime ox and those from "an old cow" when it comes to the eating. But the depot can grade these qualities, tell the truth about them, and get the consequent reputation which comes of truthfulness in a comparatively short time. A revolution, therefore, might easily be effected in this great section of our agricultural supplies, and I trust that before long every county will have established its

abattoirs upon the most scientific principles yet known. If it should be found desirable to make arrangements for the last month's feeding of the stock, that also should be taken in hand.

XI

BACON

Although cattle and sheep can to a large extent be treated as one in the matter of the co-operative dealing with them, pigs introduce, at least at the present time, an entirely new problem. Neither beef nor mutton have as yet been sold under trade marks and brands : though they may be known as Scotch or Welsh, New Zealand or American, the retail buyer merely expresses his hazy wishes and trusts to his butcher to meet his requirements. There is no definite indication on the article itself as to its place of origin as there is when we come to bacon and hams. The practicability of establishing a noted brand in these products, and of vindicating its genuineness in the law courts, is being proved now, and can be demonstrated in every county in the land if we determine to do so. We have to

consider the very delicate questions which an industry such as this raises in the field of Co-operation.

Much can be done on the lines of collecting pigs and selling them by auction, or finding more lucrative markets for them than an individual farmer can find. But no effective stop can be put in this way to the ruinous prices obtainable when no systematic attempt is made to establish uniformity of quality and a regular market. If a certain area is determined to bring about a regularised as opposed to a desultory trade in pigs, plans must be laid to that end, and resolute determination must be forthcoming to work out those plans loyally to their conclusion. To begin with, a uniform system of breeding must be set on foot in order that the stock may be of a regular grade in size and shape as well as quality. The feeding must be carried out in the manner decided upon by the committee, and in this matter the committee will naturally consult the college experts, who, on their part, will watch the results with studious interest. The collecting of the stock and carrying it to the central depot or curing-house becomes a little business

in itself ; for old methods are more than ever to be eliminated here, and " our little pigs going to market " must for ever lose much of the picturesque imbecility with which they have been invested in the past.

When we reach the curing-house itself we are in the region of a highly technical factory. There is need for an extensive building or set of buildings, a valuable plant, an expert manager, and skilled assistants. This development of Co-operation will tax its powers to the utmost extent. And it is just this difficulty and this problem of the use of expensive services as well as costly preparations which has made us persistently plead for the inclusion of the middleman in the organised movement. This bacon-curing undertaking has been left largely in private hands, and the difficulty of properly managing a highly technical undertaking will tend to leave the industry in private hands still unless we pursue a higher and bolder policy than we have hitherto pursued.

Let us look at the whole question as fully as we can. A limited or joint stock company planted in a suitable district can deal with the factory end of the undertaking perfectly.

The money can be found from the provision trade, even if it be not put up by the farmers and dealers more particularly interested in it. If it be actually subscribed by farmers alone, we have, of course, a limited Co-operative Society at once ; but it will be found generally that the middleman himself, with his great facilities and his abundant energy, arranges the whole thing. In doing so he naturally safeguards himself by securing the adhesion of certain farmers to his scheme and includes them as shareholders, even if he does not tie them down to supply a definite quantity of stock per annum. This kind of thing does to a certain extent provide a boon to those farmers who heartily fall in with it, and loyally abide by its rules. But it almost goes without saying that a factory which requires its supplying farmers to take up shares if they are to participate in the profits will not include a very large percentage of the agricultural community in its benefits. It will, as all such institutions do, help those who can help themselves—it will make the rich man richer and enable him, if he be so disposed, to dictate to the poor man who has no helper. And the result is this. The factory, though doing

fairly well, does not do nearly as well as it might do if the whole district combined as one man to support it. The poorer farmers will keep on producing pigs which are only saleable for sausages and such goods in the larger towns. They do not conform to the quality and size demanded by the factory, they are not bred from the recognised stock, nor fed in the approved manner. They are allowed to reach altogether unfashionable sizes. It is unnecessary to add that in conveying them to market all the evils of small consignments become evident.

Co-operation can deal with this awkward situation if it be allowed to act in a big and statesmanlike manner. The active middleman who arranges the factory in the way I have sketched has only to be asked to go a step further and the thing might be done. He must be welcomed into the movement and made into its guiding spirit. The manager has then the whole district before him from which to invite a supply of pigs. The urgent problem of breeding can be undertaken with the utmost ease, for the prize stock will be provided and made convenient for all. The feeding similarly becomes a thing for each to

attend to accurately in the interests of all, and in the building up of a national reputation for quality. A complete system such as this has the overwhelming advantage that it includes within its borders all the well-disposed, all who are anxious to make a living upon the true policy of giving genuine, wholesome supplies. Those who prefer the method of ill quality sold by means of lying and false representation to the poor on the plea of cheapness will be found out and, if they prove incorrigible, will be caused to disappear.

I think that even on its own merits the Co-operative bacon factory may well claim the support of all farmers, reinforced by the more active and intelligent dealers whom I am grouping under the name of middlemen. I desire to see Co-operation use these active agencies rather than suffer and cause suffering by a thoughtless, unnecessary strife with them. But I have further to point out that such bacon factories, however large, can never take the place of the Co-operative depot, although in this particular instance they may appear to do co-operative work very thoroughly and well. The breeding of pigs can never in any district become more

than a comparatively small part of agricultural energies. Pigs may become a most important element in the profit from a farm, but they will discharge their functions better by being a factor in every farm's produce than in attempting to be the sole output in any. If this be so, Co-operation can only use the bacon factory as an *annexe* to its other undertakings. The treatment of milk, the management of stock, poultry, and eggs, the breeding of horses, the procuring of seeds and artificial manures, besides the disposal of the great crops of wheat and other cereals, not to mention smaller specialities of particular districts—these must all occupy the attention of the Co-operative depot and use up the energies of its committee and paid management. In connection with bacon itself, the whole question of feeding stuffs comes in, and in many a district the assistance of miller and factor can be obtained for the society in lieu of the establishment of an opposing plant. The final feeding of pigs should always be carried out at the factory itself.

In all such true co-operation between farmer and factor it is necessary to take a firm stand upon one platform, in spite of every interest

which may plead for a different policy. The thing called in another country "the gombeen man" must be for ever abolished. To deal with persons or firms because money is owing to them, and "to pay through the nose" for goods because too poor to pay cash, is a system with which Co-operation can make no terms. It is the fear of this that makes the name of middleman to be hated in the land. The new era will put an end to all these awkward and slipshod methods, and will bring prosperity to the farmer while at the same time it removes from his factor the deadly fear of bad debts. One can never emphasise too strongly the fact that waste—waste of material, waste of labour, waste of organisation—pays no one in the end, and that co-operation and good management pay fully all those who are partakers in them.

XII

POULTRY

When we reach the subject of poultry and eggs we are dealing with a trade which is already highly organised in some areas. The details of such organisation I omit, and speak only of those considerations which affect the trade in common with other items of production. The breeding of poultry, the production of eggs, their collection and storage, and their subsequent distribution are so highly specialised that they cannot be indiscriminately mixed up with other operations of Co-operation. And the same is true of milk and meat, which cannot be treated in anything but a separate and systematic manner. In all these expert processes the services of the best-trained and most experienced managers will be required, and no single detail of care and method can be dispensed with in any individual case under

a mistaken notion that Co-operation has no need of science. The point to remember always is that Co-operation is the only means of obtaining scientific management and advice. The producer cannot individually afford such expert guidance, but by working with his neighbours in a large district he can obtain it, and can at the same time arrive at a plan of joint working which will procure for the total produce of the whole area concerned uniformity of working and a consequent largely increased money return.

And though each great co-operative undertaking—milk and its products, meat, bacon, poultry and eggs—will require the services of those who are specialists in them, there is no reason why they should not all be grouped together, and obtain all the benefits which accrue from joint working. If we look at the sale of such products alone, it is obvious that the same traveller or agent can deal with them all until the proportions of the work grow to be so vast that it becomes cheaper to specialise even here. In the matter of purchases it would be difficult to discriminate between the classes of goods required for the various producers, for it is part of the problem

that the District consists chiefly of ordinary farmers who breed cattle and pigs, and keep at least a few fowls. The collection, again, can only gain in efficiency if the depot has more than one commodity to collect, for if—at the worst—eggs and poultry only can be undertaken in a certain round, it is under no worse conditions than if it were performed by a separate society. And I desire to emphasise here that the practical combination of work in one depot, which is discharging simultaneously the various operations required, does not in any way destroy the usefulness of the general organisations which may be interesting themselves in special departments of co-operative energy. The knowledge and experience of the National Poultry Organisation Society, for instance, should still assist the poultry side of the work of all those farmers who make poultry and eggs one of their activities. And I may go further and add that Co-operation will not be perfect until this useful society is found at work in every Co-operative unit in the land. For its beneficent influence need not be confined to the collection of vast quantities of produce for sale in the towns. There is no single farmer

who might not gain materially — even if his household consumed all the eggs and poultry produced — by communicating with the poultry experts at the depot, and conducting his work according to their suggestions. For if I merely remind him that a hen may either eat twice as much as she is worth in eggs and flesh, or yield, on the other hand, thrice the cost of her rearing and food, I shall be justified in the position taken up. The great laying competitions are teaching us at least as much as this, and it is to the interest of every farmer, and even of every cottager, to put himself into touch with those societies which will guide him in his selection and management of fowls. Poultry-keeping is, from the modest proportions of its stock and equipment, the most universally diffused of all our agricultural industries, and should therefore be the one which is most fully assisted by co-operative organisation. Poultry fancying in the old form should now give way to a deliberate attempt on the part of all to secure useful lucrative birds.

Now, if we are determined to improve matters in respect of our poultry and egg

production we must carry matters further than to the co-operative depot alone. The experts there will, of course, be fully qualified to give detailed advice to those who seek it, and will be able to marshal completely the arrangements required in the district. But we should not be justified in leaving the matter there as if these experts descended from the clouds, or could be obtained by the mere offer of the necessary salaries. Poultry experts such as we desire, free from the taint of a love for merely fancy points, cannot be produced without a great amount of preliminary training. Are we doing all that can be done to secure an adequate supply of the men and women we need ?

It is very important to remember that a real expert in poultry cannot be an expert in poultry alone. We might enlarge this statement to cover all the great breeding departments, the ramifications of which reach into every nook and cranny of agriculture. Mr. Edward Brown put the matter clearly in his evidence before the Agricultural Commission : —" A point I have always held," he said, " has been that no one can succeed in poultry-keeping without knowing something of general

agriculture. The basis must be the same in both cases, and it is for that reason that I, in the first place, wanted to be in association with an agricultural college, because I do not believe it can be done otherwise. I do not believe for a single moment in what is called poultry farming by itself ; it must be associated with cultivation in one form or another. Consequently, under those circumstances, if we had students who have no experience in agriculture, then the twelve months' course is provided for them ; that gives six months' training in general agriculture and six months' specialisation in poultry-keeping. Where you have students who are already acquainted with agricultural methods, six months is quite sufficient if they are of an ordinary intelligent character." It will be evident how necessary this attitude is, especially if we look at it from the point of view which I am now taking. Our guides at the depot will have the whole co-operative district under their eyes, and in consequence will have to be prepared to give advice upon all the agricultural and horticultural questions which arise when poultry-keeping is under discussion. These technical matters will be separately considered, and I

will merely repeat here that complete and successful Co-operation must ever keep in touch with our colleges, and with all the best research work of the time. They can only do this, of course, by means of those very managers which the colleges are getting ready to supply. Research work, as well as teaching, is carried on by the staff.

Now, if we can get our Co-operative Depots conducted, as to their various departments, by men and women who have gone through the courses of training in the necessary subjects at the several colleges, we shall be beginning to apply science to the land. I have emphasised the need for the said science even in such homely products as eggs, because if we can there turn losses into profits, and poor, unappetising goods into wholesome, nutritive and attractive ones, we shall have begun to stem the tide of foreign imports into our villages and dales. The work must begin in knowledge and technical skill: until these are present mere combination has only half a life.

But when the farmer does his best at home, and when the labourer's wife learns how to treat her broods, there will undoubtedly

appear, from both of these, surpluses upon which Co-operation may work. The specialists will prepare their large consignments, but the collecting van of the depot will not despise the small items on the daily round. When these reach the stores the ordinary work of Co-operation will begin. The testing and grading, the storing for winter use, the obtaining of the best markets and the regular dispatch of goods to them will be the first business of the staff. The work is being perfectly performed at those depots, A.O.S. and N.P.O.S., already instituted. We now need to establish them throughout the land and to make them more completely, in the manner sketched above, component parts of the great and perfect Co-operative organisation which is so much to be desired. There has been set on foot a form of depot which had not previously existed, although many co-operators had looked towards it with extreme longing. At Wickham Market the Industrial Co-operative Society has joined the National Poultry Organisation Society with the best results. The give and take which a system such as this exhibits is so obvious that it passes the wit of man to conceive why Russian eggs should still

penetrate into our remote villages. The Stores which might do so much to introduce, as here, a better way, are meantime the great stumbling-blocks in the path of regeneration. When the word goes forth, however, from head-quarters to reform we shall see a marvellous change. If that word is not given the State must intervene.

I must refer to one more undertaking in this matter of poultry before I conclude. The special trade of cramming is one which requires experience, and would be better taken in hand at the depot itself rather than by the individual members of the society, unless certain of them are poultry farmers on a large scale. The foundation of Co-operation lies in those general average farming efforts which undertake no special or technical trades, but content themselves with supplying the raw material for such trades. The varied labours of a farmer must ever make it impossible for him to cram a few fowls, kill a few oxen or sheep, or establish a valuable trade-mark in bacon. But Co-operation can do all these special and technical acts for him, and so arrange matters that in the end his stock of every kind will invariably become,

if he is faithful to his fellows, beef and mutton, bacon, poultry and eggs of repute, all branded with his county trade-mark, and sought for eagerly by the buyer as produce which it is a pleasure to use.

XIII

FINANCE

There is perhaps nothing more simply good in our weak human efforts than the endeavour to assist the poor small man to help himself. How curiously unlike the same act may be if performed under different conditions! To give now a little and again a little; to "help" over sickness or accident or at Christmastide; the burden of it all is pauperism, and "assistance" is but another name for injury. Let any philanthropic kindly soul add up its donations in some such "deserving case" as I have in mind, and the total will be found to be no mean sum. If that sum had been available as a single amount at some of the junctures to which I have alluded, or, better still, at some ordinary time for the purchase of a pig and its house, or for some other such reproductive purpose, the burden of the theme

would not have been pauperism at all, but Co-operative Banking and success. I have in another place tried to show the futility of that new panacea called the Credit Bank. If there is any truth in those things which I have been urging, the large population of labourers and very small farmers wants something much more effective than a few shillings each upon a joint undertaking. The Depot can do nothing more useful to itself, as well as helpful to the small man, than the supplying of the necessary stock to those who are willing to attend to it. A wise and generous policy here would constitute the labourers' first charter of freedom and would repay the old country liberally in many ways.

If we have as our objective the retaining at home of some forty millions sterling out of the monies which now go abroad for food, we must expect that some capital which is now used in foreign trade will be wanted here. Forty millions I take as an arbitrary but reasonable sum which might be paid to our own producers for further goods, if they would grow them ; and this amount leaves the remaining mass of food imports very large and extremely valuable to the towns on our

seaboard. If we succeed by thrift in increasing our wealth, the import trade, indeed, need not largely decrease, although it may be materially altered in its character.

This prospective change in the employment of capital is very interesting. Certain channels of trade become, as it were, inoculated with capital, and it is not a simple process to transfer this active, vital element of commerce from one habitat to another. Nothing is so sensitive and nervous as money, and therefore it is important that this matter should be quietly discussed in a business-like manner. There are three chief factors in the financial position. The first is the easing of financial strain in the cases of the small farmer and the cottager. The second is the whole co-operative undertaking, and this makes a large capital expenditure most desirable. The third is the commercial activity to which I have referred, which is almost entirely occupied at present with foreign goods. Each of these three elements presents features of special interest, which I have endeavoured or will endeavour to describe.

In Co-operation we must have, for perfect working, a vital connection with the great

banks. It is here that it would be well if the heads of these houses or a new State Bank would study the problem with a view to guiding our developments. The ultimate difficulty appears to be this. I will take for granted for the moment that every farmer in a district has joined the Co-operative movement, and that, therefore, the whole trade of that district passes through the single depot which deals with it. The district has been served by four banks, each with its proportion of farmer clients whose business now passes through the Co-operative Depot. The Depot itself can use but one bank, and consequently the whole of the Co-operative movement must appear to be inimical to three out of every four such village banking establishments. There are some half-dozen great institutions which, either through their country branches, their agencies, agents, or correspondents, cover the whole countryside, and would be competing against each other in every direction if some steps were not taken to prevent such action. These banks are, of course, competing for business always and everywhere, but the effect of general competition of that kind is supposed to be beneficial to business and to

the banks themselves. But in the case I am considering it will be a national misfortune if the development of Co-operation, as written in bankers' ledgers, is left to chance. The removal of every farmer's account to the Co-operative Depot, and through it to the chosen bank, will appear like a nasty blow to those which are thus apparently left out in the cold. The result cannot fail to be injurious to Co-operation, although the total yield and turnover in the district may be doubled under the new system. Seeing, then, that the result of chance action will probably leave all the banks with the same average share of business, reached through much ill-will and painful competition in the villages and market towns, would it not be infinitely better that the banks themselves should become a single National Institution ?

We thus reach the third factor in the new financial position. When we have our County Depot full of milk for the great cities, butter, cheese, meat, bacon, and fruit, in bulks such as can be quoted just as foreign supplies are quoted, we have commodities which can be handled in large lots and can be treated by merchant and banker as produce worthy of

their attention. I devoutly hope that our eggs and apples may long be spared the gambling of the "option" market; but there is no valid reason why intelligence and skill, applied first to our acres and then to our factories and collecting depots, should not bring about as active a financial life as throbs between Liverpool and Canada or the United States. We are looking anxiously to ways and means in the establishment of these homes of Co-operation, and we are all well aware that these buildings and equipments mean money, and a great sum of money, if the work is to be efficiently performed. And here is the great need for, and the great glory of, the pioneer. We want some leader who will risk the venture and propound the only policy which will bring an adequate amount of produce out of the land. Some little philanthropy of spirit and a good deal of patriotism may be needed to make the first step—it is always that which costs; but the produce having been skilfully prepared in bulk —the larger the better, for commerce shies at the small, but never at the large—the business world will handle it with promptness and effect. As far as distribution is con-

cerned the banker takes no note, and makes no distinction between the goods whose bills and cheques pass through his hands. But in the development of production itself the case needs, as I have urged, his careful study ; for, without meaning to do so, the bank may hinder rather than assist this national work, upon which so many millions of money and so much happiness depend. The banks themselves do not, of course, initiate commercial ventures, but they are in hourly consultation with those who do, and I am anxious that the subject of our home produce and its adequate commercial handling should become familiar to those who are necessary to signal success.

XIV

INSURANCE

In general a co-operative society exists for mutual benefit, each member participating at an equal rate in proportion to the interest involved. This principle has been enlarged in order that societies may combine as societies to secure benefits for all. An insurance against fire, for instance, might be undertaken by a separate society, but the risk is too great upon each individual to make such a venture safe either for insurer or insured. The societies, therefore, are more fully protected as well as less heavily taxed if they combine to spread the risk over the whole.

But the individual societies have been thought to have their special use in such an undertaking, and this is found in their local knowledge of the members proposing to insure, and in their being able from the nature of

the case to obviate the need for the payment of commissions in obtaining business.

When the rules are perfect, and when every member is true to the rest, there will be no need for personal proposals : the whole area will insure the property as a whole. Still more necessary will this be as the county councils become interested in the equipment of the farms. It is most important to secure a simple and, at the same time, stable system of carrying the great benefits of insurance into every corner of the land. The less inviting risks are often passed by in disdain by the great companies ; they are too expensive to examine and too troublesome to watch. In the new undertaking the local committee does this work, and so manages the matter that no one is overlooked.

In my former edition I devoted some space to the discussion of agricultural insurance, and I added these words :

So much for the benefits which have been prepared by Mr. Yerburgh and his able coadjutors : I sigh for another development in insurance to which they have not up to the present set their hands. The co-operator is a good life from the very fact of his co-operation,

whatever the doctor may say about his physical health. But that is not the side of the question which interests me most. If we read the verbatim reports of our great societies, we cannot but be struck with the everlasting refrain of the chairman concerning the marvellous care and acumen of the management in their selection of lives. The refrain becomes almost burdensome when we remember how many difficulties the weaker in health have to contend against without this additional sorrow of being able to make no provision against death. The gloating of chairmen, extraordinary and ordinary directors and the like over those who have been refused the benefit of their great offices is painful even when we as members are invited to gloat with them. Can Co-operation send forth no counterblast to this deadly and defiant note ?

A co-operative District will, as I have said, probably contain a large percentage of " good lives." It will almost certainly contain a few bad ones. It is of immense importance that on the death of any member there should be some money available under a policy of insurance to meet the necessary charges and to carry on the farm, or establish the family

in some new sphere. While health lasts these poor lives bear their share of the premiums, for we are not at the moment discussing the invalids of such a community. While the operations in the name of the member continue, they add to the profits of the general activities. It does not seem a very heavy demand, therefore, to make that, in this particular kind of joint working, those who are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, and devote the surpluses obtained from commissions and the savings effected by the absence of office expenses to the benefit of those who may fall outside the pale of ordinary life business. I do not suggest any tampering with the splendid results of actuarial investigation and calculations. But I should like to see co-operative life insurance established for the express purpose of providing for the weaker brethren out of the moneys which Co-operation itself secures. The poorer life may have provided the keener intellect and the wiser judgment to the society's deliberations ; may have given an object lesson in resolution and pluck ; it may even as health declines have done useful clerical work. At the worst, from the worldly point of view, it will as it retires

from the ranks provide the highest joy "of doing kindnesses"; and such a principle as this once established will raise the value of "lives" all round, for nothing spoils them so much from the actuarial standpoint as anxiety and care.

Since writing this I have come to the conclusion that complete insurance can only be carried out effectually by Public Ownership and County Council Management of the land.

XV

THE MIDDLEMAN

I have already made several references to the position of the middleman towards Co-operation, and have enunciated the proposition that the movement should take him with it rather than oppose or endeavour to destroy him. There are two obvious reasons for this : The first is simply that we have unemployment enough, and cannot afford to drive anyone away from work ; the second is the fact that these people, who are now to a large extent doing the business of the country, though it may be in many directions by an imperfect method, are the people to be reckoned with, because they have a hold on the producer in many ways. Some of the ways are undoubtedly evil, others are just the usual and natural ones of our pre-

sent system. On the face of it, therefore, when Co-operation gets to work, it would appear natural that it should use these activities for its own purposes. The first answer to this suggestion, of course, is that these middlemen have been supplying coal at 6s. above the possible price, they have been sending in seeds that do not germinate, and they have been agents for manures that have little value even if the price were right. But it is reasonable, even here on the threshold, to point out that the system, rather than the person, has been largely to blame, for a small man who may have acted as dealer in the above goods could never have obtained for himself those "rock bottom" prices that Co-operation can secure; he has had to live out of a few customers, deliver the goods in an expensive and tedious fashion, and, as regards the origin of his commodities, he has had no technical knowledge to guide him nor facilities for securing the agency of reliable houses. I contend, therefore, that even the smallest of these unsatisfactory personages has been the victim of his surroundings, and might be used for many of the activities of the Co-operative depot with-

out harm to the society and with no loss to himself. For let it be remembered that our complete Co-operation looks to the very highest sources for guidance—to the Universities and all educational institutions, as well as to the Board of Agriculture—taking care that the latest discovery of one is made at once the common property of all. How can a blacksmith in some obscure village, who has laid out his savings in a few tons of basic slag for the poorer class of farmer, who may take very long credit, be treated as an outlaw by Co-operation? The problem is to put such blacksmith into touch with the veterinary staff of the nearest college or county teacher (perhaps an itinerant one), make him a better workman, with better pay, and enrol him and his savings in the Co-operative movement.

I do not for a moment deny that there are daily outrages of usury being committed by some small individuals upon their impecunious neighbours, and, of course, the Shylocks of the countryside will have to forgo their usual plunder; but I am convinced that much of the present inconvenience has grown out of legitimate business,

originating, perhaps, in real and neighbourly assistance, and that the actors in the old-time play will change their costumes and enact other parts on the new stage. That is for Co-operation itself to arrange when the play begins.

This question of the small man in the out-of-the-way district is but a small part of the whole problem. If we consider who is now grinding the corn for meal, buying the hay and corn, selling the young stock to run upon the grass, and buying it back when fat, taking the few pounds of butter and the few dozen of eggs each week, and in a hundred ways meeting the primitive needs of a class, shrewd but distrustful of education, we shall more quickly recognise the variety of interests which are at stake when Co-operation enters upon her rightful path. And I therefore feel justified in making one comprehensive remark.

The abilities which appear to have been, in the light of the Co-operative lamp, exploiting to some extent the struggling farmer, can be used in his interests just as safely as they have been hitherto employed, as it now seems, against them. When the Co-operative trumpet

blows it will, in a definite sense, be a case of every man to his own tent. Those who have not been, in any real meaning, dealers, such as the blacksmith whom I instanced above, will have to withdraw from this means of making money and find more legitimate ones. But those who have been buying the pigs, the cheeses, or the milk will find ready well-paid occupation in carrying out duties for the Depot in which the same class of knowledge is required. A man may know the value of a porker to a shilling on sight, and may use his knowledge to squeeze the farmer who desires to sell ; but he may use the same knowledge and experience in the position of manager or sub-manager of the District factory, and even make more money for himself than he did before. For I cannot emphasise too often the fact which dominates everything—namely, that everyone loses under a system of ignorant and dirty farm management. It is not one but all who gain when wise and scientific feeding, systematic collecting at the right weight, and uniform curing take the place of our old habits in these matters. The absolute loss incidental to irregularity in quality of every kind of produce, when it comes to

commercial handling, could not be computed in England at less than millions of pounds.

If we gently ask our blacksmith financiers to use their money in a different way, and marshal our hucksters and dealers in the army of co-operators, we shall have one other vast set of interests to deal with still. In these interests there are many grades as well as many qualities. In the case of the smaller mills and factories, that may be already carrying out useful work of a local kind in places where Co-operation ought to establish similar works, it should be quite possible, and, indeed, the normal, usage to enter into some arrangement either for purchase or joint working under fair conditions. In case of purchase, the course would usually be, no doubt, to keep the old and tried management in office. But the proprietors of such local factory must be prepared to face the fact that some *modus vivendi* is more important to themselves than to the Depot, because the produce to be treated is the property of the District, not of the factory. But in season and out of season, I urge upon all who are interested in Co-operation that they should adopt

a fair and reasonable attitude throughout all their negotiations.

There is one kind of middleman that is closely connected with Co-operation itself; there is a kind of Co-operation that is almost, but not quite, the real thing. Here, too, a politic and sympathetic attitude should be taken up, and an endeavour should be made — by providing for the payment out of personal interests, joint stock shares or other financial stakes — to reorganise the undertaking on the strictest lines, for on them only can Co-operation flourish to its full extent.

There remains that great class of national houses of business whose commodities are received with favour throughout the world. It is not necessary to suppose that their goods are protected by patent or trade-mark; it is sufficient for my purpose that they are first-rate and entitled to a valuable goodwill. Such goods are seeds, fertilisers, implements, and the like. In most of such cases business may have been done for many years, and has probably settled into a regular groove, with agents appointed under definite agreements to certain districts, so that the country is

mapped out for the various representatives. In all such cases I see no reason why Co-operation should take up an attitude of hostility at all. From the point of view of justice, it is unfair to undermine the authority of the district agents ; it would be more politic, as well as fairer, to make the best terms possible through the usual routine. And, in cases of specialities, an attitude of enmity is opposed to the very foundation of Co-operative principles.

If we are to co-operate to make a good article with a definite trade-mark to fetch a suitable price, why should we treat as enemies those who have done exactly the same thing through a resolute determination to supply a good article at a time when cheapness was the only aim and second-rate goods the only ones produced ? Some of these national houses of repute may be willing to sell out the whole undertaking to the Co-operative Movement, but until that time arrives they should be treated with respect and tempted by other methods than the boycott to place Co-operation upon the best terms. If we are to reach a position in which agriculture discharges its duties efficiently to the

comfort of its workers and the benefit of the people at large, we ought to consider with as much care those who may possibly suffer as those whom we hope to enrich by its success.

XVI

RECAPITULATION

I have now considered the chief uses and advantages of Co-operation, and will review the whole field once more, even at the risk of repetition.

The ultimate object of the Co-operative movement as it affects the land is the production of more, better and more uniform qualities in stock and crops, and the distribution of these when produced both more efficiently and at a lower cost. In other words, it is proposed to increase production, to obtain better prices because the goods are better, and to save money in distribution by using wholesale freights and the enormous powers of the central markets. This reformation of our agricultural host is to be made necessarily in the face of the enemy.

The British farmer needs no spurious aid from such remedies as Protection. It would indeed be the act of poltroons to use all the scientific labours of foreign professors and experts to whom we owe a debt that can never be computed, and then legislate crudely against the foreigner whose goods we might produce equally well and at a lower price by the same methods if we would but fling away ignorance and indolence and jealousy.

I can scarcely emphasise too often the intense need we have for scientific training in our coming campaign to secure the British trade for British acres. I urge upon all who are studying these things that this state of efficiency at home means more to us than the mere securing of the home markets. The establishment of an invulnerable army of agriculturists at home involves the creation of a population composed of personalities some of whom are capable of carrying culture, both mental and scientific, to every part of the world should duty send them abroad. Our professors start with, perhaps, more of practical and commonsense attainments than do those of our competitors. They are more fully prepared to

apply science to life than are some of their learned brethren abroad. We may therefore entrust ourselves implicitly to them without fearing that we shall become bookworms instead of farmers, or dreamers when we should be energetic commercial men. Pure science has to be dissolved in the practical before we can cause it to be assimilated either by agriculture or commerce, and here we may claim to be abreast of the work.

We can hardly hope to procure the application of scientific methods by representatives of the old school. It is to the student that we have to appeal first, and we must wait until he causes his influence to be felt with tact and respectfulness in the home. Our fathers among the farmers have already learnt to value the professor's advice. But it is absolutely impossible, even under a *régime* of strict obedience, to carry science into agriculture fully without giving the farmer a real knowledge of the principles which underlie the new methods. We have to use the hints that mendelism gives, to follow the strange acts of the bacteria, to appreciate the refined balancing of chemical treatment, and

follow the exquisite activities of botanical life.

These things cannot be learned by rote. There must be in the minds of the new generation general approval and understanding at least of the scientific bearing of later methods. These can be given at the colleges to those who attend. But it will remain for Co-operation to make scientific farming the common and usual thing. All the members may not be equally versed in scientific facts and principles, but the atmosphere of the community will be right: those who know will guide the rest, and the truth will spread. It is not necessary for each farmer to follow each step of the teaching which shows how dirt destroys the essential qualities of milk. But we have no fear that he will refuse to obey instructions; we believe that the least learned among the farmers in a Co-operative unit will yield to the general order and see that hands are washed before milking, and that all the other necessary hygienic rules are scrupulously observed.

The ordinary rules of health having been dealt with, the Districts will be in training for the more elaborate questions of breeding

and food, which must be intelligently considered in every area, which is determined to make its products the best in the market. Fine qualities of beef, mutton, and bacon cannot be established out of an indiscriminate, happy-go-lucky method of rearing stock. Nor can milk, butter or cheese be obtained of flavour and value to surpass foreign samples unless the land and its products, as well as the cattle, are managed with care. We want a happy county rivalry in all these things, so that the matter may ultimately become one not so much of bad or good farming and manufacture as a simple difference of locality and the consequent variety in flavour or style.

These efforts towards quality will not succeed unless the co-operative movement is organised upon a large scale. The big operations of the produce and provision markets are too automatic—I may almost say too lazy—to deal with vast masses of detail. The machine calls for a few articles in large bulk and of uniform quality, in order that dealings may be effected with regularity and dispatch. Under such systems the cost of handling is reduced to a minimum, whether the business

pass through the hands of an ordinary broker or dealer or is managed by Co-operation itself. And when we have obtained these simple masses of well-made goods we shall begin to cause foreign supplies to pause in their inroads, to look to their own laurels in the matter of quality, and to give to our seaports a still more wonderful supply of cheap and useful food. I wish no harm to producers in other parts of the world ; the due development of trade and the vast improvement in the comfort of many distant and neglected peoples will no doubt largely follow the reduction of our own inert dependence upon foreign food supplies.

Many other important questions are bound up with organised Co-operation. The central and subsidiary depots are a necessity not only for storage and sale but for manufacturing and grading produce of all kinds. These collecting and manufacturing centres involve others for distributing in the large towns. But these central establishments will not be concerned with trade and manufacture alone. The fundamental needs of co-operative finance and insurance will be considered there, and the all-important development

of small holdings and national rather than individual tenures will take place within them and by their inspiration. With the attack upon diseased milk and meat there must develop a systematic method of insurance and the financing of beneficent operations. It is not possible to conceive of adequate stamping out of tuberculosis, *e.g.*, without an organised effort, in which the nation itself must join, to eradicate the pest. The German method of sterilising disease and allowing the public to eat the food from which it has been driven does not commend itself to English minds. Such a system is no saving in the long run, for it extends the time during which mischief works : a resolute determination on the part of farmer, butcher, and consumer to obtain pure food is the most economical in the end, even if the immediate result is costly. But, of course, to spend money in order to secure health in our herds, and then to admit diseased meat from the outside, would be absurd in the extreme. Co-operation in dealing with our home problems must be supplemented by peculiar vigilance at the ports to ensure that our efforts are not stultified. Complete insur-

ance organisation involves large areas and uniform conditions. The effort towards health, therefore, is identical with that which seeks to establish valuable commercial trade-marks and larger, simpler, more valuable units. Such a system of co-operation depends upon credit rather than upon capital, and money will pass freely between the vigorous, thriving, co-operative producer and a fully satisfied public.

Co-operation, if it does not belie its name, will be a beneficent influence and no other. The idea of conflict with other genuine interests is a mistaken one. The impression or prejudice that the landowner can really flourish more in isolation than in fraternity is false, for it involves the supposition that anyone can claim all the protection of a State and decline to discharge the duties it imposes. The State must always from time to time revise the results of unforeseen contingencies. More particularly it must, at all hazards, endeavour to improve the general weal. I have no anxiety, therefore, on account of those in possession of certain privileges which the State may be obliged to alter, for that very act, performed

in the due development of the people, will make the remaining privileges of more importance and the possessor of them a gainer by participation in the increase of the general good.

In the first edition of this little book I took the efforts of voluntary co-operation with a certain optimism and tried to believe that the A.O.S.—Mr. Yerburgh, Mr. Harris and the rest—might eventually succeed. The war came, and an inevitable period had to be put to fooling: the risk was too great of continual piping to those who would not dance. England has never been remarkable for its "permissive" efforts, and success in Co-operation means the loyalty of ALL. The observant reader will have noted that even one traitor to the policy might destroy a valley by his tuberculous cattle, weedy meadows, impure milk, and absence of arable. I now plead, therefore, for that complete co-operation of which I have tried to explain the principles. I urge that the State, through its County Councils, should undertake the work which involves Public Ownership of Land, and Organisation of Farm Management and Labour. I would, however, once more protest that

though I must disturb the ancient tenures, I look wistfully for the time when the occupants of them will rise to this new opportunity of securing a nobler citizenship in our National Life.

Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.