

**LARGE AND SMALL HOLDINGS: A
STUDY OF ENGLISH
AGRICULTURAL
ECONOMICS. WITH CONSIDERABLE
ADDITIONS BY THE AUTHOR**

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Large and Small Holdings: A Study of English Agricultural Economics. With Considerable Additions by the Author by Hermann Levy & Ruth Kenyon

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HERMANN LEVY & RUTH KENYON

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LARGE AND SMALL HOLDINGS

A STUDY OF ENGLISH AGRICULTURAL
ECONOMICS

BY

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WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS BY THE AUTHOR

UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

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

TO THE
MEMORY

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

HERMANN LEVY

HEIDELBERG

February 1911

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LARGE FARM SYSTEM

INTRODUCTORY

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

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

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