

FOOD SUPPLIES IN PEACE AND WAR

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Food supplies in peace and war by Sir R. Henry Rew

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SIR R. HENRY REW

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PREFATORY NOTE

To my old friend, and sometime colleague, Major Craigie, C.B., I inscribe this book, knowing that in him it will find one sympathetic reader.

My interest in food supply statistics, and in agricultural economics generally, extends over nearly forty years, and it has been my good fortune to have opportunities of continuing, and, in some degree, supplementing the pioneer work in this field, for which Major Craigie's name is known throughout the world. The influence which, mainly on his initiative, the International Statistical Institute exercised in formulating general principles for the collection of statistics of agricultural production has been, in more recent years, reinforced by the specialised and systematic work of the International Agricultural Institute. There still remain many gaps to be filled and many defects to be remedied before statistics of the world's food supplies attain completeness. The war has set new obstacles in the path of statistical progress, and it is impossible at once to

re-establish all the old international relations. The years that have passed since the International Statistical Institute last met, at Vienna in 1913, have left scars which time alone can heal, and some of those who foregathered there have passed away.

An adequate survey of the wide field suggested by the title of this book must await fuller knowledge and more quiet times. Here is an attempt only to indicate the main features and to get the salient facts into right perspective. The treatment of the subject is more insular than I intended at the outset, but it is not easy to look with equal eye on all the nations when our own difficulties loom large and insistent. The aftermath of the war involves a re-orientation of national policy in regard to all economic and social questions, among which the future of the Land—and all that this implies—is prominent. Politics are outside the scope of this book, and it deals with the past as well as the present. For, after all, if the problems of to-day present themselves in a new guise they have their roots in a very old world.

R. H. R.

December 1919.

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INTRODUCTION

OF the three elementary needs of man—food, shelter and clothing—food is not only the most vital, but also the most universal and constant. Dwellings and clothes may be, in some climates and under some conditions, temporarily or even permanently dispensed with, but a regular supply of food is the prime necessity of life. Man may rely, like the “black fellow” of the Australian bush, on nature, and make little more provision for his sustenance from day to day than the animals, or he may depend, like the inhabitants of crowded cities, for every meal on a complicated and widespread organisation; but in any case food he must have or die.