

**FIFTY MILLION
STRONG OR OUR
RURAL RESERVE**

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Fifty Million Strong or Our Rural Reserve by Ernest Irving Antrim

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ERNEST IRVING ANTRIM

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OR

OUR RURAL RESERVE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

BISHOP WILLIAM F. ANDERSON, METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE Country Life movement is one of the most remarkable and significant facts of our day. It seems hardly credible that the first national commission was appointed in 1908. That any movement in so brief a time should have gripped the thought of the leaders of American life and should have created so extensive and high grade a literature upon the subject, is itself as fine a tribute to the importance of the work as could be imagined.

The rural population of the United States includes over one-half of the entire population. We include, in the term "rural," villages and towns not exceeding twenty-five hundred in population. The thirteenth census revealed the following facts: That in only six of the forty-eight states was there a decrease in the rural population; eight states increased over fifty per cent; six between thirty and fifty per cent; twelve between twenty and thirty per cent; ten between ten and twenty per cent, and only sixteen of the entire number of states increased less than ten per cent. The value of farm property for the same period increased over one hundred per cent and aggregates at the present time more than forty billions of dollars.

By common consent, the church is at the very heart of the rural life movement. If a body of men had been appointed to exalt the relation of the church to rural community life, they could not possibly have done it more effectively than it was done by the report of the first national commission on the rural life movement. That report is notable in the remarkable way in which it magnifies the church in its relation to the betterment of rural community life. The movement has gripped our educational and constructive leaders in a way scarcely paralleled in so brief a period of time. It is the beginning of a new and better day for the rural life of America. And it will be seen at a glance that any effort to redeem American life

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must include rural life, which is so much a constituent of national life.

This volume itself is a testimonial to the fact that the movement makes a strong appeal to the minds of laymen. Mr. Antrim has given careful study to the subject, and deals with the vital facts of the problem in a living and vital fashion. This little volume will be a valuable contribution to the already rich literature upon the subject. It has a real mission. May it have multitudes of thoughtful and earnest readers.

Cincinnati, Ohio,
February 26, 1916.

PREFACE

THIS little volume modestly seeks to establish the four facts (1) that *America*, because of her location, her natural resources, her racial heritage, her history and the ideals of her people, gives promise of becoming, in the words of Sir Gilbert Parker, "the vast controlling factor in the destinies of modern nations;" (2) that *Rural America*, great relatively in the "Age of Homespun," less influential during the rise of the cities to supremacy, but today all athrob with new life, is enjoying a renaissance prophetic of a brilliant future; (3) that *Rural Leadership*, with a vision of the mountain-top variety, with the incentive of the most inviting careers in the field of human endeavor, and with the prospect of wonderful accomplishments in the Big Business of both the Secular and the Spiritual Kingdom, is enthusiastically assuming the responsibility of an inspiring task; and (4) that *Rural Co-operation*, in developing a more satisfactory economic plan, in building up a better social and recreational life, in strengthening the agencies that contribute to intellectual growth, and in fusing the scattered forces of the spiritual realm into unified effort, is working out an epochal Program of Preparedness.

The manuscript was read by Professor G. Walter Fiske, of the Oberlin Theological Seminary, Mr. Albert E. Roberts, of the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, and Mr. Percy F. Bicknell, literary critic, to all of whom, as well as to several others, grateful acknowledgment is made for valuable criticisms and suggestions.

E. I. A.

Van Wert, Ohio,
March 6, 1916.

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