

crops: so that except for some small items he was practically self-sufficient. If he had to obtain, for example, the leather for the harnesses of his ploughs from another farmer, he could obtain enough leather for several ploughs in exchange for one plough. The position was therefore that the other farmers in general needed more of Mr. A's products than he required of theirs.

THOUGH Mr. A's farm was the wealthiest in the country, it was not the largest. There was, for instance, Mr. R. who had an even larger estate, but much less highly developed. For many years it had been inefficiently run, till new methods which could be described as vigorous and experimental had fairly recently been adopted in an attempt to make up this leeway. Like anything new, these methods were regarded as highly controversial by most of the other farmers, while to say that the more conservative farmers like Mr. A. considered them unorthodox would be putting it mildly. In fact, Mr. A. regarded Mr. R. with deep suspicion and even fear, and seemed to have the idea that Mr. R. was only waiting for his opportunity to persuade Mr. A. to adopt these new methods on his own farm, even though at this time Mr. R. was fully occupied (owing to a recent setback which need not be discussed here) with his own under-developed property.

Though their properties almost adjoined at one point, the children were forbidden to play; and so grew up distrusting one another, though away from their families they would no doubt have played together as happily as any other children. The farmers had, indeed, gone to the trouble of erecting high barbed fences on the boundary through which the children shouted insults. (Mention of fences implies another story, by no means unconnected with this, but one which would only complicate this simple account.)

Though Mr. R. was greatly in need of some of Mr. A's ploughs and other equipment, for which he would have been able to give in exchange timber, for instance, from his extensive plantations, it was in the nature of things that any exchange which took place was on a very small scale.

This rather extreme case has been described to illustrate the sort of relationship that existed between the various farmers; although they were all neighbours in one small country their attitude could not be described as "neighbourly." And while they were all concerned with the same problems of how best to clothe and feed their families, it was their differences that seemed predominant in their dealings with each other, though they were alike in imputing to each other their own worst intentions. And they had no hesitation in behaving towards one another in a way that they would have been ashamed to see repeated within their own families.

RETURNING to an examination of Mr. A's farming methods, we could probably say that in many ways the activities of his different sons, each of whom was allowed to run his own part of the farm in his own way, demonstrated a lack of co-ordination similar to that we noticed between the farmers themselves. Each son produced his own crop without regard for any overall plan, and was indeed inclined to resent as interference any advice or suggestions on Mr. A's part, and each son disposed of his crop as best he could. Though if all went

well production might at times be high, obviously this system was liable to be haphazard, and there tended to be periods of unregulated over-production paid for by poor seasons of under-production.

AS we mentioned before, it had come about (for a number of complex reasons which need not be discussed here) that Mr. A. had become increasingly prosperous while some of the other farmers had fallen on lean times. Most of them were greatly in need of his ploughs and other equipment, of his horses and food products, in most of which he had some surplus at this time; but the trouble was that there was little that he required from the other farmers, or that they had to spare, except for a few odd specialised items which could in no wise redress the balance.

This then was the problem which was worrying them all at this time. What was to be done.

THE farmers who needed the goods, of course, found the position most irksome. They disliked extremely the idea of being dependent on Mr. A's charity, and were determined to do their utmost to meet the situation with their own resources. (It is perhaps a mistake to use the word "charity," for we have seen that there was little disinterested charitableness in the farmers' dealing with each other.) They called a number of meetings, but the meetings, like most in this country, were marked not so much by an unwillingness to come together, as by their apparent inability to come to a decision; or, if they should agree on a course of action, to put it into effect. Nor was there ultimately any compulsion for a farmer to abide by a decision. But it seemed that however much they exerted themselves, with the present unproductive state of their farms there was just not enough to go round without Mr. A's reservoir of wealth. Of course the same situation was repeated to some extent among these farmers, for even among themselves they did not all have the same powers of exchange.

And as for Mr. A., what was he to do? Could he, if he wished, remain a virtually self-sufficient island of wealth in a sea of varying degrees of poverty? There was in this country no taxation of the rich, nor any social security to help the less fortunate in their time of need, and giving was still, though in a rather limited sense of the word, voluntary. Mr. A. had always believed, not in each according to his needs, but in each man for himself; and he liked to think that his wealth was his own to do what he liked with. On the other hand he was not entirely without a sense of obligation, and it was true he had family ties with some of the other farmers, and he had always rather prided himself on his popularity among them as a good fellow. But they knew that more realistic considerations than these would be needed with the practical Mr. A. and his hard-headed sons.

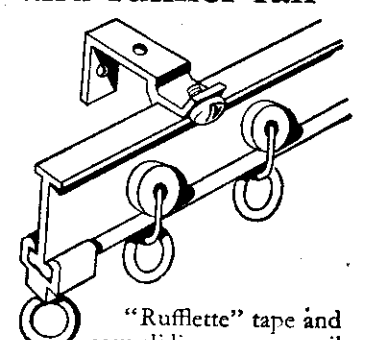
IT was generally thought that Mr. A. was a sufficiently experienced farmer to know that a farm was not an isolated community; and that if the other farmers through poverty were unable to tend their land properly, then the gorse and other weeds which would spring up would threaten equally his own land. And he realised that he would find it

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