

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to throw light upon the subject of rural credits and to lay before the American people the customs and laws in operation in other countries, so as to prepare the way for more enlightened plans for improving land and agricultural credit facilities in the United States. It is my hope that the material here collected will be helpful in creating a credit system or systems adapted to the needs of the agricultural interests of this country.

The subject of rural credits has occupied my attention, more or less, for a considerable number of years, and I have availed myself of the opportunities of my position as American Ambassador to France to familiarize myself with agricultural conditions and credit systems and institutions in Europe. Furthermore, my twenty-eight years' connection with the Society for Savings in the City of Cleveland, as treasurer, chairman of the board, and president, has been of great value to me in the formation of ideas regarding financial questions, and especially with respect to coöperative credit. The Society for Savings, with nearly one hundred thousand depositors, is one of the largest of the many savings banks in the country. It has no capital stock; it is mutual in its administration and operations, and was founded primarily for the purpose of encouraging thrift. Indeed, for several years, I have deemed it a patriotic duty to investigate the rural-credit systems and institutions of various nations and to give my fellow-citizens the results of my research.

The project for improving farm-credit facilities and introducing coöperation credit in the United States is not a new one. In an article published in the *Journal of Social Science* in 1869, Henry Villard, the railroad builder, gave an interesting account of the Schulze-Delitzsch banks, and remarked that