

## II

## HOUSING BEFORE THE WAR

[A review-article written just before the outbreak of the War, and printed in the *Economic Journal* for December, 1914, on *The Land: The Report of the Land Enquiry Committee*, Vol. II, Urban.]

THE names of the Committee are given on the title page as follows: A. H. Dyke Acland (Chairman), C. Roden Buxton (Hon. Secretary), E. Richard Cross, Ellis Davies, De Forest, E. G. Hemmerde, J. Ian Macpherson, B. Seebohm Rowntree, R. Winfrey, with J. St. G. Heath as Secretary, R. L. Reiss as Head Organizer of the Rural Enquiry, and H. E. Crawford as Head Organizer of the Urban Enquiry. Presumably they all agreed, with the exception of Baron de Forest, whose views are expressly said not to "coincide with those of the other members of the Committee." The rural and urban parts of the inquiry were apparently never intended to relate to the same things, as we are told that the Committee was appointed by "the Chancellor of the Exchequer" ("Mr. Lloyd George" would, I think, have been more accurate, the inquiry being unofficial) to obtain "an accurate and impartial account of the social and economic conditions in the rural parts of Great Britain," but of the "nature and working of the existing systems of ownership, tenancy, and taxation and rating of land and buildings in urban districts and the surrounding neighbourhoods, and their effect on industry and the conditions of life." The quaint title, *The Land*, gives the key to this curious arrangement: in the country "the land" is supposed to dominate everything, and therefore the Committee could be directed to inquire into everything, while in the towns it was allowed that there might be some evils which could not be ascribed to the laws of England and Scotland in relation to land.

But even so the "urban" part of the Committee's task is one of stupendous magnitude, and it would not have been surprising that the "urban" volume should have run, as it does, to over 700 pages, even if it had been well arranged and concise, which it certainly is not. It is divided into four parts, "Housing," "Acquisition of Land," "Tenure," and "Rating." It would be natural to expect Tenure to come first in an account of the "nature and working of the existing systems of ownership,