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The Tyranny of the Countryside

Frederick Ernest Green (1867–1922) was a writer who specialised in recording the daily lives of farmers and agricultural workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This volume, first published in 1913, contains Green's description of the poverty and other problems faced by contemporary agricultural workers. Using his first-hand experiences as a member of a rural Surrey parish council, Green discusses in detail many aspects of the lives of agricultural workers. He explains the power that farmers exerted over their labourers through providing both employment and housing, and explores the nepotism that existed in rural local government. Through his descriptions of rural villages and rural labourers' daily lives, Green demonstrates the depressed conditions and lack of social mobility which existed in rural Britain at the time of publication and examines the causes of this, providing valuable information for the study of changes in rural societies.

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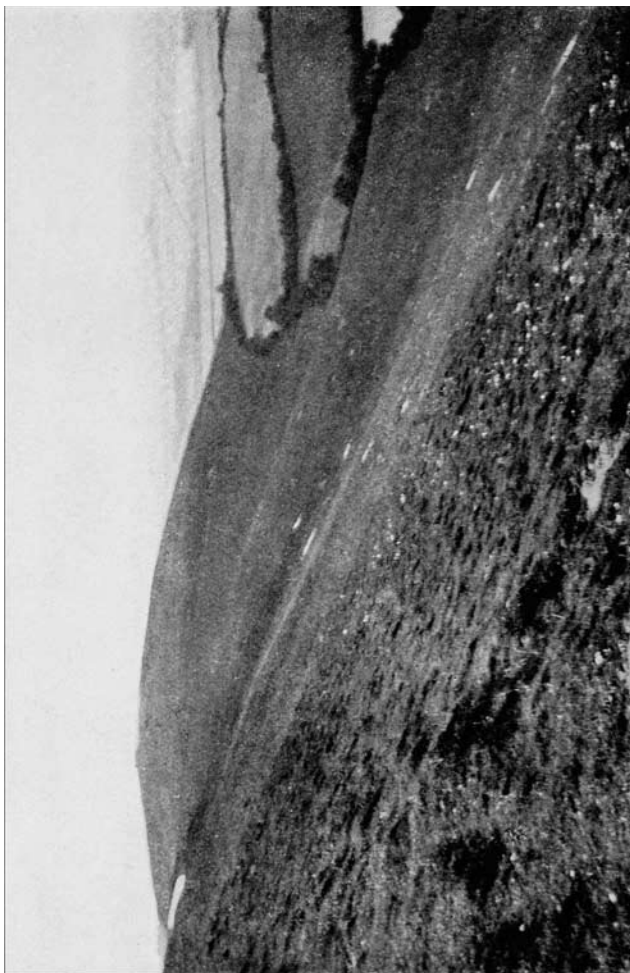
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In Downland. No room for new cottages!

Frontispiece.

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THE TYRANNY OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

BY

F. E. GREEN

AUTHOR OF "THE AWAKENING OF ENGLAND," ETC.

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

T. FISHER UNWIN

LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

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THE MAN WITH THE HOE

*God made man in His own image, in the image of God made
 He him.—GENESIS.*

*Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
 Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
 The emptiness of ages in his face,
 And on his back the burden of the world.
 Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
 A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
 Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
 Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
 Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
 Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?
 Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
 To have dominion over sea and land;
 To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
 To feel the passion of Eternity?
 Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
 And pillared the blue firmament with light?
 Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf
 There is no shape more terrible than this,
 More filled with signs and portents for the soul,
 More fraught with menace to the universe.*

*What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
 Slave of the wheel of labour, what to him
 Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
 What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
 The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
 Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
 Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
 Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
 Plundered, profaned and disinherited,
 Cries protest to the Judges of the World,
 A protest that is also prophecy.*

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*O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
 Is this the handiwork you give to God,
 This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
 How will you ever straighten up this shape ;
 Touch it again with immortality ;
 Give back the upward looking and the light ;
 Rebuild in it the music and the dream ;
 Make right the immemorial infamies,
 Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes ?*

*O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
 How will the future reckon with this Man ?
 How answer his brute question in that hour
 When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world ?
 How will it be with kingdoms and with kings,
 With those who shaped him to the thing he is,
 When this dumb Terror shall reply to God,
 After the silence of the centuries ?*

EDWIN MARKHAM.

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It is almost impossible to estimate a landowner's power. Outsiders imagine it is curtailed in these democratic days, I know otherwise. The landowner has the farmers in his grip, and they are aware of it, and grovel before him. Through them he controls the ploughmen. The villagers as well are in his hands; they work for him or his tenants; they occupy houses owned by him or his dependents. Even the higher-class resident, the doctor, the schoolmaster, the shopkeeper, dare not oppose the laird. A word from him or his factor and their custom would be gone.

I should say indeed that never in history has his power been greater than it is now.—
JAMES BRYCE, in *The Story of a Ploughboy*.