

The same facts can be viewed another way in the following table :—

*Table No. 81.—Table showing Percentage of Total Male Occupied Population engaged in Agricultural Pursuits as at the various Censuses from 1901 to 1945*

| Year.        | Per Cent. | Year.        | Per Cent. |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| 1901 .. .. . | 31·6      | 1921 .. .. . | 30·5      |
| 1906 .. .. . | 29·4      | 1926 .. .. . | 26·6      |
| 1911 .. .. . | 28·8      | 1936 .. .. . | 28·5      |
| 1916 .. .. . | 31·2      | 1945 .. .. . | 29·3      |

The actual change in the number of males engaged in agriculture relative to the change in the total number of occupied males is therefore not as marked as previously thought. The figures for 1936 and 1945, however, must be treated with caution, as, for the reasons stated above, they may hide a real trend.

Another view of the population development in agriculture is shown in the following table, wherein details are given from successive censuses of the number of employers of labour and the number of farmers who have been working on their own account without employing labour :—

*Table No. 82.—Table showing the Number of Farmers employing Labour and the Number of Farmers working on their Own Account without employing Labour, differentiating as between Male and Female, for the Period from 1901 to 1936*

| Year.   | Males. |        |        | Females. |       |        | Grand Total. |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|----------|-------|--------|--------------|
|         | E.     | O.     | Total. | E.       | O.    | Total. |              |
| 1901 .. | 16,491 | 20,595 | 37,086 | 601      | 937   | 1,528  | 38,622       |
| 1906 .. | 20,312 | 21,989 | 42,301 | 664      | 862   | 1,526  | 43,827       |
| 1911 .. | 19,275 | 28,795 | 48,070 | 711      | 1,146 | 1,587  | 49,927       |
| 1916 .. | 21,005 | 32,881 | 53,936 | 815      | 1,294 | 2,109  | 56,045       |
| 1921 .. | 24,129 | 39,956 | 64,106 | 950      | 1,313 | 2,264  | 66,370       |
| 1926 .. | 21,776 | 37,062 | 58,838 | 1,105    | 1,196 | 2,301  | 61,139       |
| 1936 .. | 30,176 | 35,179 | 65,355 | 2,204    | 2,008 | 4,212  | 69,567       |

NOTE.—E = employers ; O = owners working on own account. 1945 figures not available.

Certain features of the table are of considerable interest. In the first place, until 1921 the number of farmers working on their own account without employing labour increased by practically 100 per cent., over 1901 while the number employing labour increased by only approximately 50 per cent. As between 1921 and 1936 the employers of labour increased considerably, while the farmers working on their own tended to decrease. The probable explanation of this is the increased returns which were coming to farmers from improved farming and marketing methods, and the tendency for farmers to employ at least one hired hand and to relieve the wife from assisting in the sheds. Perhaps the most significant feature of the table is the relative steadiness of the number of farmers as between 1921 and 1936 (later figures are not available). The recession in 1926 is of considerable interest and appears through all the tables concerning farming population (for instance, in the table given previously it was shown that the total farming population fell from 131,000 to 120,000 between 1921 and 1926). It is very difficult to give a reason for this change, except to suggest that perhaps during this period some land which had been taken up in the earlier part of the decade was unsuitable for farming and had been allowed to go back. This, however, cannot account for the whole of the recession, and it is possible that the tendency to mechanization did result in some larger areas being absorbed and the falling-out of production of some of the smaller areas of an uneconomic size. The figures for 1936, however, are subject to the remarks made earlier concerning the effects of the depression. There was definitely a drift to rural occupations during the immediately preceding period. The marked increase in the number of employers of labour may be influenced by the tendency during that period to employ subsidized labour.