THE LAND UTILISATION SURVEY OF BRITAIN.

ADDRESS BY COL. SIR CHARLES CLOSE,
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THOSE who are interested in natural history, and those whose hobby is archaeology, may both find it useful to study the utilisation of the land in past ages, and, in fact, a good deal of work has been put into this subject by competent authorities, and a good deal has been published with reference, for instance, to Keltic cultivation in this country and elsewhere. The study enables us to learn something of the agricultural methods of our remote ancestors and gives us some idea of the character of the countryside in those times. But it stands to reason that our knowledge of this is very incomplete and fragmentary. Later on, when we come to the time of Domesday Book, I have no doubt that experts, with the aid of Domesday and of ancient charters, and of the many features in England that have not greatly changed from time immemorial, would be able to prepare a very plausible map showing the cultivated and forest areas in many parts of the country. But there has, as a fact, never been produced, until the last few years, a map showing, in detail, the varied ways in which the land surface of England has been made use of.

I hope, therefore, that the Members of the Field Club will pardon me if I devote this address to a brief consideration of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, which is the first systematic attempt to put on the map the use which humanity makes of the soil. In Great Britain we are given some 90,000 square miles of exceptionally varied and valuable ground. What use are we making of it? The Land Utilisation Survey gives an answer to this question.

The originator and director of the Land Utilisation Survey is Dr. Dudley Stamp, who created a voluntary organisation for the purpose. The work of marking the uses to which the land is put is carried out by voluntary workers all over the country. These workers take with them, into the country, six-inch maps of the areas that they are dealing with; and on these maps they mark forests and woods, meadows and permanent pasture, arable land, heaths and moors, gardens and orchards, and land agriculturally unproductive. The magnitude of the task will be realized when it is stated that there are about 22,000 quarter-sheets of the six-inch map to be covered.

Dr. Stamp has received much welcome help from the Education Authorities of the various counties. In Hampshire the County

Council and Mr. Coates, the Director of Education, have done much, with the aid of the County Schools, to forward the work. Mr. Vickers, the Principal of the University College, Southampton, has given the scheme his support, and welcome financial help has been given by Mr. Jeremiah Colman and Lord Iliffe. The sheets of the Isle of Wight, Bournemouth and Swanage, have been published and the Southampton sheet will shortly be issued.

When the six-inch sheets of a sufficient area have been marked in the way described, the information is transferred by reduction to the one-inch map. It is really somewhat remarkable how well even very small areas of about an acre, or less, show up on the one-inch map. Of course much depends upon the choice of suitable colours for the various categories of land utilisation. It will probably be agreed that Dr. Dudley Stamp has chosen his colours well. The results are vivid and graphic, and give us a picture of the surface of Britain such as we have never had before. It is a new kind of topographical map, and for some purposes may even supersede the traditional kinds.

The flora and fauna of our county are mainly dependent upon the character of the land utilisation and scientific studies of the biology of Hampshire should take account of this utilisation. For this purpose the Biological Division of the Field Club will find the utilisation maps indispensable. These maps do not yet cover Hampshire, but a good beginning has been made.

From a national point of view the maps may be looked upon as part of the machinery for ascertaining our position in the matter of food supply, and the possibilities of the future. It is well known that in the matter of food we are very far indeed from being self-sufficient. As a fact, we import some 60 per cent. of the food that we eat, and we are in a far more dangerous state in this respect than we were during the War, for the reason that it will be more difficult to ensure the arrival of food ships. Calculations have been made to the effect that our population is so dense that we cannot hope under existing conditions to feed our people from existing home sources ; but we can certainly improve matters. The Land Utilisation Survey will be a valuable asset in the process, which cannot long be delayed, of setting our house in order. Our traditional optimism has misled us ; we are incurring unjustifiable risk in allowing matters to remain as they are.

To come back to the stricter paths of science, we may also, rightly, think of our successors. Eventually they will be curious to know how we made use of the soil, and they may derive interesting and useful knowledge from a study of the utilisation maps—if the maps survive. We may hope that some special precautions may be taken by the organisers of the survey, to ensure the preservation of these important documents. Paper deteriorates, colours

fade ; unless great care is taken the record will disappear. But it is possible, by printing on selected paper, to provide against the first of these contingencies ; and something can also be done to prevent the fading of the colours.

I will end with a word to the ordinary users of maps. In this series we get something which is not to be found elsewhere ; we get maps which show us more of the humanized character of the country than is to be seen on the maps to which we are accustomed. We see less of the hill features and more of the uses to which humanity has put those features. Indeed, with the exception of the mountainous regions of our Island, the country is what man has made it, and on these maps we can see what man has done to the surface. It is a matter of some interest to compare, for instance, the ordinary one-inch map of the Isle of Wight with the Land Utilisation map of the same island. They are complementary, but the human side of geography is, of course, much more brought out on the latter than on the former.

Those who would like to know more about this important undertaking may be advised to write to the Director of the Land Utilisation Survey, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, W.C. 2.