

for at least the basic agricultural products is very inelastic. Man does not eat more bread because he has more to spend or because bread is cheaper. On the contrary he eats less; during the great rise of America in prosperity from 1889 to 1929 the *per capita* annual consumption of wheat flour fell steadily from 224 lb. to 175 lb.

What then is mechanization doing for agriculture?¹ If we look at particular processes in specially suitable areas the results are no less striking than in industry. Instances can be quoted of agricultural machinery accomplishing certain forms of work with one hour's labour which a century ago took 3,000. And the development has been recent and rapid. In 1914, 270 combine harvesters were manufactured in the United States; in 1929 the number had increased to 36,957. In 1916 only about 30,000 were made there; in 1928 there were no less than 853,000 in use. Sir Robert Greig had recently estimated that since 1850 machine-farming developments through the world have released 27 million men from agriculture. These are striking figures, but their significance may easily be exaggerated. It is in the harvesting of grain

¹ For most of the information in this passage the lecturer is indebted to *World Agriculture* published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1932.