

## PART I. ALLOTMENTS

### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE OF ALLOTMENTS IN RURAL ECONOMY

It has been said sometimes that the history of allotments began with an act of Elizabeth. This is not strictly true, because a modern allotment is detached from a dwelling or other building, while the provision of the Elizabethan act was that the land should be attached to cottages. But the statement brings out a conception of land policy which has always existed in our country, though at times it seemed to disappear and often was ineffective. The chief aim of this policy was to secure that at least the head of each family occupied by the cultivation of land should have some direct control, as owner or occupier, of some of the land he cultivated. The landless labourer was considered in some degree an anomaly and a social danger, and many measures have been taken to advance some form of small holding.<sup>1</sup> Whenever a change occurred which threatened to divorce the worker from the control of land, measures were taken sooner or later to assist him to maintain control over a small portion of cultivated ground. The reasons advanced in favour of this policy have been economic, social, and political in character, but often there existed a sentiment in its favour which lies deeper than any stated reason. When possessed of some feeling of property in land, rural workers develop a strong love of locality and a keen community feeling. Also, in proportion as their feeling of property in

<sup>1</sup> Statutes: 20 Hen. III, c. 4; 3 & 4 Ed. VI, c. 3; 4 Hen. VII, c. 19; 31 Eliz., c. 7.