

## PREFACE.

THE Story of the C.W.S. presupposes a general acquaintance with the co-operative store movement in England and Wales. The book may find readers, however, who have not had occasion to discover what economic and social principle that movement actually is built upon, and a few words of introduction therefore may be useful.

It is in some respects unfortunate that co-operators have been obliged to adopt current terms like "profit" and "dividend," for the use of these words has led to much misconception. For example, the modern store movement and the Wholesale Society freely are charged with departing from the principles of the Rochdale Pioneers, when to the student it is clear that the history of both consists in one logical, persistent, almost automatic working out of those principles. The Pioneers lived in a world where men on one hand were bidden to love their neighbours as themselves, and on the other were led in all economic matters to put self-interest first. The contradiction was a little more than they could endure; hence, while they also sought to advance themselves, it was with the difference of taking their neighbours along with them. This principle of mutual effort was not new; it belonged also to Owenite socialism, to trade unionism, to the friendly societies, and to every effort, social, educational, or religious, in which the good of one was the good of all. They applied it to trade and the consumer, by improving upon existing forms of mutual shopkeeping.

A private merchant opens his doors speculatively, taking a risk of profiting by the needs of customers hitherto unsupplied. In mutual shopkeeping the customers estimate their own demand, provide their own store from which to supply it, and retain for themselves what otherwise would be "profit," but is in this case a saving upon a domestic business conducted within the consumers' own circle or club. The grocer's wife is better off than her neighbour because she can get her provisions at wholesale prices. Beyond the ascertained and averaged cost of working expenses, the co-operative store system practically enables any housewife to be in this respect upon an equality with the grocer's, the draper's, and the bootmaker's