THOSE who are interested in the development of social security in the United States are turning today, as they have for many years, to Great Britain. Whatever happens there in this field has significance for us here. No better evidence of this could be had than the attention we have given to the recent report upon social insurance and allied services presented to Parliament by Sir William H. Beveridge. We may differ from the British in our efforts to achieve social security, but we cannot plan adequately without taking their ideas into consideration.

To understand these ideas, to appreciate, for example, the significance of the Beveridge Report, and, indeed, to understand our own past, we must look to England. There is our inheritance. For more than six hundred years, English statesmen and other English leaders have been writing in statute and in literature the record of their attempts to deal with insecurity and human need. Everything that we have addressed to this end derives from their experience or has been influenced by it.

Nothing in philosophy or principle that could be called our own began to develop with respect to the problem of poverty until well toward the end of the last century. Only after 1930 did the discussion of the subject reach the place of importance in our national forum that it had occupied in Parliament since the reign of Henry VIII; and the commencement, with the Act of 1935, of our national program of social security came a quarter of a century after the inauguration of the British system. So it is that the person who is interested in the expedients that have been tried in the past, in the shifts in theory and in public policy, and in the thought and action out of which the concept of social security has developed, will find his sources of basic information in the wealth of documents and books that have come to us from Great Britain.

I have endeavored to summarize what have seemed to me to be the most significant trends in the English development, hoping that such a recapitulation by someone on this side of the water would...
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carry a special appropriateness for readers in the United States and, written from an experience in both public and private administration, would have the value of what might be called an operative perspective.

Since most of the years which this history spans have been concerned with the problem of assistance, social insurance being only a generation old, I had at first thought of calling the book Six Centuries of Relief; but the appearance of the Beveridge Report, focusing trends in thought that have been expressing themselves with growing strength since the coming of social insurance in 1911, makes it possible to include a discussion of Britain's plans for the future. Our story starts with the English experience and ends with a British program. It begins with six centuries of relief and, pausing after thirty years of insurance, includes both past and future in the title England's Road to Social Security.

In writing, I am addressing: first, administrators of social security—both insurance and assistance—and men and women preparing themselves for such work, as well as the members of county, state, and federal boards in this field; and second, college students—graduate and undergraduate—in sociology, political science, and related areas; but I believe that some knowledge of the long duel between government and poverty and the efforts of the people to achieve security is part of a general culture, and so I offer this book also to the person who would like to become acquainted with one of the most interesting aspects of English history.

Social insurance today needs no definition. The word "relief" however, is becoming so much a part of the past as even now to call for explanation. It may be described as money, goods, or services supplied by an organization, philanthropic or governmental, to an individual who has applied for economic assistance because he has not enough in earnings or other resources to obtain for himself the necessities of life. Such aid, when provided in the form of maintenance in an institution, has been spoken of as "indoor relief"; when supplied to people in their own homes, as "outdoor relief."

"Relief" is an old word. It appears in the first statute—1536—in which Parliament placed on the government of England the responsibility of seeing to it that the poor received help. The term is now passing out of use. Today, in the United States as in Great Britain, it is being replaced by the word "assistance." Differently conceived, as indicated by its change of name, it is playing its part
along with social insurance in the program and organization of social security.

As a means of avoiding footnotes, I have listed the sources of quotations or specific facts in an appendix, the number in the text indicating the reference. There is no occasion for the reader to pursue these references unless he is seeking the authority for a given statement. Everything else has been included in the running text.

Permission to quote from the sources cited in the Bibliography has been sought and has been received from most of the publishers whose names appear in the list of books. The difficulties in communication because of the war have prevented me from hearing from a few of those to whom I wrote. It has not seemed wise to delay publication on their account and I am therefore, by way of acknowledgment, mentioning them along with those from whom I have had word.

In addition to drawing upon statutes, documents, and books, I have had the special help of four persons. My wife, Elizabeth de Schweinitz, has read the manuscript in all its various stages, contributing to the development of the project from her experience in private social work and in public assistance; Karl de Schweinitz, Jr., has read it with a view to its appropriateness for undergraduates; Elisabeth Schneider, associate professor of English in Temple University, Philadelphia, from a background of historical scholarship and research both in this country and in Great Britain; and Michael Ross, now Research Director of the Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America, from a broad knowledge in the economics of social security and an early association with the labor movement of his native England.

K. de S.

Philadelphia
April 1943