

Book Reviews

E. A. KOSMINSKY, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century*. Basil Blackwell, 1956. xxviii+370 pp. 37s. 6d.

This is not a new book, but a new edition of the *Studies* that Professor Kosminsky published in Russian ten years ago. It is presented now with a preface in which the author replies briefly to Professor Postan's criticisms of the first edition, and an editorial introduction which seeks to introduce to English readers not the author, who is well known, but "the background of the Soviet medievalists." This background is peopled by the figures of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. None of these was as well acquainted as Professor Kosminsky is with medieval England, but all three command his respect as exponents of human affairs. This fact, which may automatically recommend the book to some English readers, will probably dismay many more.

As a marxist Professor Kosminsky is concerned with the conflicts within English society in the thirteenth century, and particularly with the struggle to exact or withhold "feudal rent"—the fruits of that part of a peasant's labour which was not devoted either directly or indirectly to keeping him alive. As "the traditional organization for the appropriation of feudal rent is . . . the manor," the non-marxist might be forgiven for regarding the book as primarily an account of the manor in its diversity. There is striking evidence of that diversity here, for some of the forms in which the manor appears have only the name in common. No one is better equipped than Professor Kosminsky to revise this nomenclature, borrowed by the historian from the lawyer, but it has not yet been revised, and he is forced here into the procrustean habits that its use entails.

Most of the evidence for this study comes from the Hundred Rolls, which cover a territory—the south-east Midlands and Cambridgeshire—in which are many of the great estates from which the classical theory of the

manor has been derived. It is also, as Professor Kosminsky shows, an area in which anomalies abound, as they commonly do when theories are applied to the accidents of human life. In the past the great estates have attracted much attention because their administration created a mass of documents, many of which have survived to inform the historian. The small estate, usually managed in the owner's head, is likely to escape the notice of the modern as of the medieval theorist. As the Hundred Rolls set out to describe all free holdings, large and small, they are potentially valuable as a corrective to the evidence surviving in private archives, and Professor Kosminsky has studied them intensively. After a useful description of their origin and contents, he proceeds to a lengthy, quasi-statistical analysis of the holdings that they describe. This analysis is ingenious and impressive, but its value is open to question. The author is at pains to point out the shortcomings, both inherent and acquired, of his material. He adduces other evidence to compensate for these deficiencies, from such sources as inquisitions post mortem and ministers' accounts, but these he also shows to be unreliable in a number of ways. Having raised these objections, he then treats his figures as though after all they were suitable for statistical manipulation. It is true that some of the conclusions are of a very general kind, and hardly need statistical demonstration. It is not surprising, for example, to learn that villein tenements are small on the smaller manors, and that the cottar is most prominent on the smallest estates. The villein needed a tenement large enough to keep his family alive, if he himself was to be free to work on the demesne. There must always have been an acreage below which the usefulness of a manorial demesne would be impaired if a full allocation of land were made to villein tenants. This fact is not plainly alluded to until p. 314. But points of this kind can be made without elaborate statistical

analysis; discussions of incidence, distribution, and so forth cannot be divorced from strictly accountable evidence, and such evidence seems to me to be lacking here.

This kind of criticism might be extended to the rest of the book, valuable as some of its contents are. If the reader cannot accept its dialectical method, he is bound to grudge the time that is spent in developing the argument. There is a good deal here that is interesting, but also much that is arid. There are twelve pages in which the peasant's budget is discussed, and other writers' conclusions reviewed. Most of the time the individual is overshadowed when classes are discussed; here for a moment he emerges, and a sorry figure he cuts: "the main body of the English peasantry . . . were . . . a middle peasantry crushed by feudal exploitation" (p. 240). But it may be noted that Professor Kosminsky, in reconstructing a typical budget, is unable to take account of a family's earnings in rural industry, which must quite often have helped to keep body and soul together. In general, indeed, his comments on industry are rather vague. On the other hand, some of those on trade are too precise: who else would say (p. 322) "The number of towns . . . at the time of Domesday amounted to 80"? And the remark on p. 326 that "it is quite clear that the sea trade passed exclusively through King's Lynn, Sandwich, Hull, and London" either does not mean what it says or is mistaken.

It can no longer be said with confidence that the free peasantry of the Danelaw was "a direct result of the Danish military colonization," but this is a reminder of the difficulties attending the publication of such a book as this. The difficulties of translation are also in evidence. Here we have such alien and bizarre expressions as (p. 208) "Critique of Theory of I. I. Granat," and (p. 301) "The Two Aspects of the Labour of the Cottar." These are prominent as headings, and there are other oddities in the text. Where reading of this kind is not compulsory it is unlikely to be read at all.

GEOFFREY MARTIN

CHRISTOPHER TRENT, *The Changing Face of England*. London, Phoenix House, 1956. 244 pp. 21s.

This book is "intended to help readers trace in the open air the influences which have changed the face of our country," and by this yardstick it must be judged. It would be no service to the reader whom Mr Trent obviously has in mind, the serious and observant amateur, to recommend this book, particularly since Dr Hoskins's *Making of the English Landscape* covered exactly the same ground a year ago. That book had clarity of style, novelty of local illustration, and an experienced awareness of the needs of adults who are keen to explore the historical landscape. What of Mr Trent?

He has the virtues of zeal, sincerity, and energy. His style may not irritate all readers, so let that pass. Novelty? this is confined to forty new photographs by the author, the fruit of his own journeys, and the best part of the book. Other illustrations are less happy: the aerial view of the open fields of Crimsote, well known since its use by the Orwins in 1938, is said to show fields "Celtic or earlier." The open-field map which matches the photograph exactly could have been seen at the Warwick County Record Office. A "contemporary print" (p. 156) purports to show an early nineteenth-century landscape near Princes Risborough. But the print is no guide at all to the landscape of its day. The artist puts in a house or two to suggest a village and a hedge or two for the countryside. On this scale (the two Risboroughs an inch apart, in real life three-quarters of a mile) the artist had neither the intention nor the ability to show the real divisions of the landscape.

Efficient and persuasive exposition? The failure of the book to help its readers is most dismal in the final chapter, "Exploring Your Own District." Anyone who thinks this review stony-hearted should read these eleven pages or the trite eight-page chapter, "A Glimpse of the Future." Large parts of the rest of the book fail to assist the reader simply because of the absence of map illus-

trations or of references to maps. Unless a reader has been where Mr Trent has been, the citation of places and views is meaningless.

What if Mr Trent's readers want to follow up the matter? The bibliography is odd. Domesday Book is at the head as "a principal source-book," but both adjective and noun must be employed in some unusual sense? The reading advised has some startling omissions and some highly individual inclusions. Who would have thought that Arthur Bryant's *Age of Elegance* would have been in and yet no recommendation of the Orwins, Sir Cyril Fox, or Darby's *Domesday Geography* (citing only three absentees)? or that an author who (from pp. 156-60) seems to have read Dr Hoskins should omit to recommend him? or that it was necessary to mention two volumes of *The Oxford History of England* as "standard works but not specially illustrative of the Changing Face (*sic*)"? or that Miss Elizabeth Levett's *Studies* should be sought in a catalogue under Arthur?

A conflation of other people's works ("I am indebted probably to a far greater degree than I realize") is only worth while if it enlivens the reader by some superior vision or a more effective assembly of detail. What of detail? The word "feudal" is misused throughout; the Cottage Act (31 Eliz. cap. 7) is misunderstood (it was to prevent the mushroom growth of shelters for the poor and not the close-building of village houses, as a simple reading of the Act would have shown); the Statute of Merton did not leave the issue of "sufficient pasture" to lords of manors, but—as abundant printed records show—to local juries; wheat was exported as a surplus long before the "early part of the nineteenth century;" in short, Mr Trent is too near the state of an amateur himself to be able to help others, and if he is to have anything new or helpful to say it will only be after he has had some acquaintance with record offices, the publications of local record societies, manuscript estate-plans, and printed county- and town-maps. Of all these the reader is left

ignorant. In default, it must always be a case of the *Guide* leading the guide.

M. W. BERESFORD

H. C. DARBY, *The Draining of the Fens*. Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 1956. 314 pp. 35s.

The new edition of this book differs little from the first edition. There are a few fresh entries in the bibliography and a brief summary of post-war developments in the last chapter. The new edition is slimmer and more comely than the 1940 edition.

The need for a comprehensive history of the Drainage of the Fenland is great, but Professor Darby's book does not satisfy it. He has given us a mere catalogue of events without any real explanation of their causes. Brute facts are of no interest in themselves, but only for the answers which they allow historians to give to certain important problems. In a book which is one of a series devoted to studies in economic history the reader naturally expects to find reference to problems in which economic historians are interested. What *was* the drainage of the fens and when did it happen? Who were the drainers and why did the fenlanders so hate them? Was the ancient sewers' organization really working as badly as the propagandists declared? What land was flooded and for how long? How does the drainage of the fens relate to the agrarian problems of the day? What part did the process play in the animosities which led to the Civil War? Such questions, and many more, the historian of the Fenland must try to answer, and until research has settled the answers to at least some of them no general summary of the history of fenland drainage is possible.

The history of fen drainage will be the fruit of many years' painful labour upon the extensive documentation which survives. There are, for example, the copious sewers' records of the Spalding, Boston, and Spilsby Courts of Sewers, in the Lincolnshire Archives Office and the County Hall, Boston, the Cambridgeshire sewers' records at Wisbech Museum, the archives of the Spalding

Gentlemen's Society, the Banks Papers, and multitudinous parochial and manorial records, besides the great collections in the Public Record Office and the British Museum.

Two other points call for notice. First, the Bedford Level is not the Fenland, but only about two-fifths of the Fenland. Any book which ignores modern drainage works in Lincolnshire is bound to give an inadequate account of fen drainage. The *Draining of the Fens* devotes only 56 out of 261 pages of narrative to the Lincolnshire Fenland. The bias is clearly seen in the last, amended, chapter, where Professor Darby considers drainage schemes of the future. He devotes all his space to the schemes of the Great Ouse Catchment Board and does not tell his readers that the other catchment boards also have schemes and that the latest drainage work completed since 1947 is the Coronation Channel at Spalding and the widening of the Welland.

Secondly, the writer perpetuates the myth that the Fenland lay waste until the seventeenth century. The great period of fen drainage was the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, when the fenlanders enclosed nearly 200 square miles of siltland and fen-edges and converted it into arable and meadow. Closer attention to recent work on the Fenland, especially to that of Dr Joan Thirsk, would have led to complete revision of the first two chapters of this book. Such a revised version would not have settled the economic history of the sixteenth-century Fenland for good, but it could have shown what problems there are to solve.

H. E. HALLAM

E. DUNSDORFS, *The Australian Wheat-Growing Industry, 1788-1948*. Melbourne University Press, 1956. xii+546 pp. £2 15s. 6d. Part I of this large book contains a historical account of the development of wheat production and trade in Australia from the arrival of the first convicts, with their attendant Governor, warders, and army families, to the problems of the immediate post-war

years. In Part II, Dr Dunsdorfs expounds with the help of all available statistics the relationships between the various trends shown over these 150 years: market prices and area under wheat, changes in yield, changes in costs of producing wheat, rural population and wheat production, the importance of wheat-growing in the national economy. The two parts taken together contain everything that the economic historian could want to know on this subject. When so much has been provided, it may seem ungenerous to ask for more, but one reader at least would gladly have sacrificed all the logarithmic charts (a pernicious invention of the statisticians) for a series of black-and-white maps showing soil types, rainfall, temperature, even State boundaries and railways. The geographical setting of Dr Dunsdorfs's story seems inadequately staged. And secondly, Dr Dunsdorfs is in places inclined to rear a mighty statistical edifice on what appear to be shaky foundations, and especially so when he gaily establishes "the" cost of wheat production, or the total of profits and losses obtained from wheat production, in the whole of Australia. The fact that his table on p. 425 proves conclusively that from 1914 to 1941 wheat growers had lost over £200 millions in growing wheat confirms my suspicions of agricultural accounts as supplied by farmers to Royal Commissions or laboriously assembled by economic historians.

EDITH H. WHETHAM

W. M. WILLIAMS, *The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956. x+242 pp. 25s.

Rural sociology has been almost wholly neglected in this country, except by the novelists of the soil. Mr Williams, a trained social anthropologist, sets out to remedy this neglect to some degree by making an intensive study of one rural parish and the changes that have taken place over the last fifty to one hundred years within its boundaries.

How does one select a single parish for study in this way? Mr Williams chose north-western England as his region (for reasons

that are not revealed), and within that region west Cumberland; and within the region he found that Gosforth was the parish which satisfied his other criteria. It was a reasonable size in population; it was sufficiently remote from the acids of modernity, which have tended to dissolve so much of rural England into a rather nondescript mass; it has a long history; and it contains both a village and a wide area of scattered farms.

The civil parish of Gosforth covers eleven square miles on the western fringe of the Lakeland Fells, and is about two miles from the coast at its nearest point. Nearly two-thirds of the population live in the village, and the remainder in dispersed farms and cottages. Over two-thirds of the householders were born in the parish or within ten miles of it: there are several people in Gosforth whose families have lived there for four centuries or longer, so that "many cultural features of considerable antiquity have survived until the present day."

After more than two centuries of relative stability, the population of Gosforth began to rise about 1810, reached a maximum about 1870, and has since declined steadily to about half the size it was eighty years ago. The village itself has increased in size since 1870; the decline is seen in the dispersed farmhouses and cottages, many of which are now used only for barns and byres, while others are just heaps of rubble on the ground. This in itself is a profoundly important cultural change.

Mr Williams's ten chapters are concerned with the economy of the parish, the Family, Kinship, and Social Classes; with that good old sociological standby—"Some Aspects of the Life Cycle"—with Neighbours, Community, Religion, and with 'Gosforth and the Outside World'. There are eight appendices on various subjects, all worthy of study, and many pages of valuable and entertaining notes on the sources and the text. *The Sociology of an English Village* has already been widely reviewed and praised as a notable contribution to rural sociology in England. It can be read with profit by all who are interested in the English village and

what has happened to it over the last hundred years. One wishes there were many more studies equally good for other distinctive regions of this country.

Mr Williams was only just in time at Gosforth. The Atomic Energy Commission is already on the doorstep. "All in all, every development that has taken place in parish affairs in recent years has emphasized and reflected an urban way of life in various ways. Against this the traditional way of life is static and can offer nothing to replace the loss in community feeling which is a result of these developments. The social structure, an inheritance from the past, was not designed for a world where every individual is conceived of as a highly mobile unit, and does not seem capable of adaptation to suit this concept. If the present change continues to its logical conclusion, then the sociologist of fifty years hence may well find it difficult to distinguish Gosforth from any other rural parish in England."

I am not competent to discuss Mr Williams's book as a sociologist, but much that he says is valuable to the historian and it is on these aspects that I should like to offer a few comments in this review. So much of sociology as written seems to me, speaking as an amateur enquirer seeking enlightenment, to consist of windy abstractions: a great deal of what everybody knows already, and lengthy discussions of the trivial and the obvious. Most sociological textbooks could profitably be reduced to one-third their present length. Few of them attempt any discussion in depth: that is, over a considerable stretch of time. Surely the historical method is indispensable to the real sociologist. Without it his conclusions are bound to be jejune and superficial.

Mr Williams stands out as a sociologist of sense. He has used the parish records and other local sources extensively and so given "an historical background to the sociological analysis." This alone would make his study notable. The study of the pattern of land-ownership and occupation, for example, draws upon the glebe terrier of 1778, the

enclosure award of 1815, and certain literary sources (there is apparently no tithe award). The chapters on the Family and on Kinship make use of the parish registers, which begin in 1571; and the cartulary of St Bees is drawn upon repeatedly.

I venture to suggest, however, that his chapters on the Family and on Kinship would have gained greatly if he had also used some of the central records in the Public Record Office. The fuller hearth-tax assessments of the period 1662-74, for instance, are invaluable for showing the structure and ramifications of rural families especially, the existence of extraordinary groups of the same family name, and very often the wide economic range covered by a single family name in the same generation. In one large Midland village in 1670, the 161 households in the hearth-tax assessment represented eighty-two different family names; but within the framework of this commonplace observation one finds two families with no fewer than eight branches in the village (in one instance all the branches had been thrown out within the preceding ninety years), and three other families with six branches each. Many other families had three, four, and five branches in the village. A Leicestershire woman once said to me that when she got married, some forty years ago, she immediately became related, through her husband, to every other family in the village.

Mr Williams could have made even better use of the parish register than he has done. For most parishes this reveals whole dynasties of peasant families, intermarrying closely on their own economic levels, so that the degree of inter-relationship in the seventeenth-century village, for instance, is nearly incalculable. These are facts of high importance to the historian as well as the sociologist, for in this enormous blood-brotherhood lay the greatest strength of the peasant community in the face of external economic and social change.

A systematic examination of the parish registers, the wills, and the tax assessments for Gosforth in the second half of the seven-

teenth century would have produced a wonderful picture of the kinship of a rural parish at that date, while life was still relatively static (or was it? what degree of family mobility was there even then?). Over a longer period a similar study of the sources would have yielded, for all the imperfections of some of the documents, some valuable material on the longevity of families in the chosen parish. What proportion, for instance, lasted a hundred years at Gosforth? How many lasted for two hundred years, and so on? What kind of peasant stayed the longest—the bigger man, the middling man, or the smallholder; the freeholder, or the copyholder? Was there greater mobility in some centuries than in others? How and when did the 'dispossessed' arise as a class in a remote rural society? Is it connected with the growth of population on a relatively fixed supply of land? All these questions, and many others, seem to me to be fundamental to sociology as well as to history, although Mr Williams might reasonably object that some of them go farther back than he was prepared to go in this book. But I cannot see, for example, that he has used the census schedules for 1841 and 1851, which are preserved in the Public Record Office, to construct a picture of kinship in his parish a hundred years ago, a picture which might well have been very revealing as to the extent of change even in this remote parish during the past century.

A sociologist trained in the use of historical sources could produce a first-class study of an English parish, or small town for that matter, for the period between the early sixteenth century and the present day. Such a study might well tie up at its edges with the examination of house-types over the same period, which one is glad to know that Mr Williams has already done for Gosforth, and will shortly publish elsewhere. For example, did the older generation retire into a 'parlour' in the farmhouse when their working days were over, or were they housed in a separate cottage? What is the meaning of the 'double farmhouses' one comes across in Dorset and possibly elsewhere also?

There exists a considerable territory on the frontier between history and sociology which few have yet touched, let alone explored, with the notable exception of Professor Homans in his seminal work on *The English Villager in the Thirteenth Century*, and now Mr Williams in a more limited way in the book under review. It is one of the merits of his excellent and stimulating book, so full of good meat and ranging over such a wide field of social life, that it should raise so many other important questions. *The Sociology of an English Village* is a pioneer study, as others have remarked. It makes a limited, though valuable, use of historical sources; but it points the way to an even richer study based upon the local historical records of the past 450 years.

W. G. HOSKINS

ESMÉ WINGFIELD-STRATFORD, *The Squire and his Relations*. Cassell. xii + 424 pp., illus. £2 2s.

A new book by Esmé Wingfield-Stratford must always be looked forward to with lively anticipation by those who have read his earlier works. He is gifted with a persuasive style though it is occasionally marred by such lapses as "thought up" and a rather too frequent use of the phrase "stay the course." His learning is exhaustive, and he has a freshness of outlook that is always stimulating, and rarely a dull acceptance of traditional views. We must always be thankful for such writers, even if we do not agree with all their conclusions.

The present book is, as its title indicates, a history of the squirearchy as well as its apologia. It traces the rise and decline of the landed gentry in the local and national government of the country, and defines the period of its effective control over and leadership in rural England, from Tudor to Victorian times. It even anticipates a resumption of authority and direction by a new race of squires in modern times, which seems an unlikely event in these days of official decisions and advice.

There is much in the book that is challenging, and that is one reason why a reviewer

must exercise caution equal to that exercised by the writer in presenting his conclusions. It is altogether too easy to condemn a book because it contains some statements with which it is impossible to agree. Few people would, I imagine, be prepared to accept the conclusion that the relations between the labourer, cottager, farmer, and landlord were always amiable, and that the rural poor always accepted their situation without resentment. The only active protest against his conditions that is noticed here is the Captain Swing riots of 1830, and a novel view of these is presented. The rising was not the result of hardships caused by enclosures. It broke out in the south-east where the open-field system was abolished, if it had ever operated, before the sixteenth century. This is certainly true, but the sporadic riotings of 1795 and 1816 are not mentioned. Whether the situation of the labourer at these dates was the effect of the eighteenth-century enclosures or not, it was desperate, and the men and women indicated it in the only possible way. They seized stocks of grain, flour, and provisions and sold them at what they estimated to be fair prices. Twenty-five years before Arthur Young reported that a labourer had denied that thrift would help him, asking whether he would be allowed land for a cow if he saved his money, and calling raucously for another pot of beer. These things do not indicate contentment.

Nevertheless nothing can be more true than that the great landowners took the lead in farming during the eighteenth century. The names of Tull, Townshend, Coke, the Duke of Bedford, and innumerable others spring at once to mind. They were not altogether philanthropists. They wished to improve their estates and to make larger incomes from them, but they did make English farming a pattern for the world in their day. After 1830 their interest declined though there are great names associated with the foremost agricultural societies during the nineteenth century, as any reader of the journals and transactions is forced to recognize. The squirearchy did not perform the same func-

tion individually in that century as in the preceding despite the members of these corporate bodies. An excellent illustration of the changed outlook of the landed gentry is that the country house libraries were not expanded by the purchase of contemporary literature after about 1830, and this is carefully underlined.

The steady increase in local power of the squires by reason of the decentralized system of government from Tudor times and the part they played in national government until the rise of the manufacturers is described; their promotion of legislation to support the agricultural interest is carefully worked out.

In spite of their apparent homogeneity the squires were a mixed bag, as every class of people is; and their ranks were constantly being depleted by the failure of families, either by sterility or stupidity. Similarly new blood was always being infused by the penetration of new rich into their ranks. And both by reason of isolation and of wealth there was amongst them a great freedom to develop individuality. None of these points is missed in this story and many more are discussed. It is a fascinating book to read, but I cannot help feeling that the examples given are to some extent selected, as is possibly inevitable. For this and other reasons the book is rather provocative, but what is the use of a book on such a subject that is not?

Few writers could hope to write the history of a social class so that all its readers would agree with it in its entirety, but this study must be read by all who wish to know something of a most important class of countrymen, whose influence on the development of our farming was so great. Its partiality can be excused in its writer.

G. E. FUSSELL

VICARS BELL, *To Meet Mr Ellis: Little Gaddesden in the Eighteenth Century*.

Faber and Faber, 1956. 160 pp. illus. 15s. William Ellis of Little Gaddesden wrote a great many farming textbooks in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. His agricultural precepts, many of which naturally

appear again and again in the different books, are interlarded with anecdotes of persons and their actions, stories of gypsies, horse copers, and so on, many of them having quite a Borrovian flavour. Much of this material was condemned at the time and by later critics as irrelevant padding which only obscured what ought to have been his main and only theme.

Mr Bell rejoices in these details. From them, and the contents of Ellis's *Country Housewife*, he has attempted to describe life as it was lived in Little Gaddesden about 1750. He is fortunate in being able to supplement Ellis by the observations of that clear-eyed critic, Pehr Kalm, who was at Little Gaddesden in 1748. He has also used the contents of the parish chest. It is difficult from such limited material to collect any clear impression, and the voluminous quotation necessarily carries with it a rather disjointed effect. The chapter headings are most felicitous.

The book portrays every aspect of life in this village as fully as the sources used will allow, and supplies details of everyday occurrences in the kitchen, the cowshed, the field, and the fireside. The details, however, remain details and are not woven into the story of a day, a week, or a season. They are just happenings, and in so much are very similar to the routine of seed-time and harvest, lambing and calving, and so on that are the events in all villages, and which have been described in so many local histories. The more of such collections of details the better, I suppose. The obvious similarities are corroborative, the differences informative about local variations; but I feel that Mr Bell was often as greatly intrigued by oddities as Ellis and Kalm were, and as perhaps I am. For example, the hay lathe in Ashridge Park, 1748, illustrated on p. 135, is obviously the same as that described by Sir Hugh Plat as used at St Albans a hundred and fifty years before. This is a detail for me; amongst the others there must be some for other people. That is the value of such compilations.

G. E. FUSSELL

H. E. DALE, *Daniel Hall, Pioneer in Scientific Agriculture*. John Murray, 1956. 242 pp. 21s.

SIR E. JOHN RUSSELL, *The Land Called Me: An Autobiography*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1956. 286 pp. 25s.

The story of the development of agricultural organization, education, and research as they are today is in all essentials a twentieth-century story. Hall, Dale, and Russell, the three men with whom these two books are associated, played leading rôles in the formative phases of this story. Sir John Russell, the sprightly octogenarian who is happily still with us, also writes the foreword to the book on Daniel Hall. The first sentence of this foreword—already much quoted—can aptly be applied to all three, for they all belonged to “the band of pioneers who in the 1890’s refused to accept the widespread view that British agriculture was dead and only awaited burial at the hands of the Board of Agriculture.” That is why Dale’s elegant and scholarly biography of Daniel Hall and the revealing asides in Sir John Russell’s characteristically modest autobiography are important to the agricultural historian.

In the words of his biographer, Sir Daniel Hall “did a remarkable work, and he was a remarkable man.” That work falls conveniently into three parts: that which was accomplished before, during, and after his fifteen years as Development Commissioner and as a higher civil servant.

Born in Rochdale, educated at Manchester Grammar School, and proceeding to Jowett’s Balliol as a Brackenbury science scholar, Hall started his career with a short spell of schoolmastering in Birmingham. The turning-point came with the decision to become a lecturer under the University Extension Movement in Kent and Surrey at the time when the “whisky money” was beginning to lubricate the educational machine in rural England. Henceforth he made it his mission “to carry science to the farmers.” In 1894 Wye College was started and Hall became its first principal. His pioneer courses at Wye were widely fol-

lowed and to this day their influence is discernible in the agricultural curricula of colleges and universities. In 1902 Hall was appointed Director of Rothamsted Experimental Station, then at a critical stage in its history. Here for the next ten years he revitalized the work of Lawes and Gilbert, and developed Rothamsted on lines which reflected views he had already formed about the direction in which research in agricultural science should go if it was to meet the needs of farming in the modern world.

The five books which Hall found time to publish in this first period up to 1912 are now of great historical interest. *The Soil, Fertilizers and Manures*, *The Feeding of Crops and Stock* are still read for their intrinsic worth, but they are now notable as an indication of the immense strides in agricultural science which they heralded. In the words of Sir John Russell, they are “a remarkable trio which we are not likely to see repeated as it is improbable that any one in the future will be competent to write on all three of these subjects.” The other two books—*The Book of the Rothamsted Experiments* and *A Pilgrimage of British Farming*—are “already classics in the sense that they will always find readers so long as men feel any desire to know the history of agricultural science, or to see a picture of British farming and the British countryside as they were in the days before the great wars.”

The two chapters which deal with the eventful years from 1910 to 1927 are as much a history of agricultural research and administration as a biography of Hall. They gain authority from having been written by a distinguished civil servant who occupied a key post from which to observe the events he chronicles, and who was, moreover, the author of two standard books on the working and the problems of the higher civil service. The pioneering story of the Development Commission and the revealing picture of the administrative machine in action given in these two chapters make them of absorbing interest both to the agricultural historian and to the student of government.

Hall was made an original member of the

Development Commission set up in 1910 to administer the £2,500,000 Development Fund which had its origin in the Lloyd George Budget of 1909. In 1912 he accepted the offer of a paid Commissionership, thereby becoming virtually the Commission's permanent adviser. Before the end of its first year the Commission had decided to do three things: to extend research and education; to promote inquiries to measure the economic possibility of establishing flax, hemp, tobacco, and sugar beet in this country; to encourage the organization of agricultural co-operation. The promotion of research, education, and advisory work was, however, soon to become the keystone of the Commission's activities. It was as one of the two architects (the other was Sir Thomas Middleton with, interestingly enough, the 'synoptic' influence of Sydney Webb in the background) of the implementing structure that Hall was to make his great and enduring contribution. This structure had three tiers. First, the 'agricultural organizer' and the 'farm institute' catered for the farmers at the county level. Secondly, the 'advisory officers' centred on colleges and universities stood to the county organizers "in something like the same relationship as the medical consultant to the general practitioner." Thirdly, a chain of specialized institutes closely connected with universities and colleges provided for systematic, continuous, and fundamental research in the various branches of agricultural science. So far as the third tier is concerned there can be no dissent from the judgement that "Hall, far more than any other single man, may justly be called the creator" and that in the event he gave this country one of the best systems of agricultural research to be found in the world.

Hall's translation from the Development Commission to be Permanent Secretary to the Board of Agriculture in 1917 started "the least happy and the least fruitful period of his life." It lasted only three years, but the candid and detailed record of these three years given by his biographer are of the greatest interest and for two main reasons. First, the record

happens to deal with the critical years when real power in agricultural affairs had passed largely from the Board to the war-time Food Production Department whose Director-General was the 'bonny fighter' Sir Arthur Lee (afterwards Lord Lee of Fareham). It fell to Hall, however, to advise and to help his chief Sir Rowland Prothero (afterwards Lord Ernle) to pilot the contentious Corn Production Bill through Parliament and the story of the passage of that bill given here makes good reading. Secondly, the record gives a frank and searching account "of the revolutions in the Board's higher command" which stemmed from the reaction of the orthodox higher civil servant to "the advantages and disadvantages, to both the parties concerned, of the entry of men from other professions into government service at a mature age." In 1919 Hall ceased to be Permanent Secretary but he remained a civil servant for a further seven and a half years in the newly created office of Chief Scientific Adviser and Director-General of the Intelligence Department. In this office, and later as a member of the Agricultural Research Council, he had the satisfaction of assisting actively in the task of bringing to full and vigorous working order the great schemes of research and education which he himself had designed at the Development Commission.

At heart Hall "was always more of a gardener than a farmer," and it must have been with the greatest pleasure that in 1927 he followed his great friend Bateson as Director of The John Innes Horticultural Institution on the outskirts of London. Here he remained until war came in 1939, when he made his last move, this time to the Lord Wandsworth College in Hampshire, the home of yet another educational venture to which he had already given long and loving service. One aspect only of his many and varied endeavours during this third and last phase can be mentioned here. "For many years the agricultural economist and reformer in him had been steadily growing on the man of natural science," and in his last book—*Reconstruction and the Land*—published the year before his

death, he advocated a comprehensive policy which would permit science to have full scope in determining the structure as well as the practice of British agriculture.

Unlike a good biography, which evokes criticism, a good autobiography evokes enjoyment. By this test Sir John Russell's urbane autobiography is a very good book indeed. The very title tells us a lot about the man. Sir Daniel Hall was attracted to agriculture mainly because he saw the golden opportunity it presented for scientific adventure and, as stated above, his last book proposed an all-embracing plan for the future of farming. Sir John Russell tells us that he first got interested in agriculture while doing social work amongst the poor of Manchester, when he "conceived the idea of establishing an agricultural settlement, to which people who had failed to make good in the towns might come." He knew nothing about country life in England, but he "remembered the little farms of Wales and how vastly better the people lived there." Since then Sir John has become a good countryman himself, but he has never lost his early concern for the underprivileged. His autobiography shows him to be, in truth, a very human scientist.

Like the biography of Hall, *The Land Called Me* also spans a long period of incredible change and can be conveniently considered in three phases. Each phase is, in its different way, of interest to the historian.

The first six chapters bring the story up to 1901 when, at the age of twenty-nine, he was appointed on Hall's staff at Wye College. For the social historian these chapters, and especially the first three, are of absorbing interest. Without in any way dramatizing his beginnings Sir John gives a vivid picture of his boyhood and youth in the London and the North of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is the familiar story of the fight against black-coated poverty waged by the middle class, with their respect for education and their determination to win the benefits which they believed education alone could bring them. In the case of young Russell this

determination took him successively to the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and, for six years as student and demonstrator, to the Owens College, Manchester.

In the four chapters covering the second phase Sir John tells of his life at Wye and of his thirty-one years as Director of Rothamsted. He is far too humble a man, however, to do justice to his great achievements in this responsible position. But this can surely be said, that Sir Daniel Hall was as lucky to have been followed at Rothamsted by Sir John Russell as Sir John tells us he was lucky to follow Hall.

Sir John has always been a great traveller, and the remaining eight chapters of the autobiography narrate the incidents of his many journeyings in Europe, Africa, India, Russia, and America. These chapters help to explain how it came about that an octogenarian was to be the author of *World Population and World Food Supplies*, the standard book which is likely to remain the chief quarry for scholars in search of the facts of world agriculture at the mid-century.

EDGAR THOMAS

NIGEL HARVEY, *Ditches, Dykes, and Deep Drainage*. Young Farmers' Club Booklet No. 29. Published by Evans Bros. Ltd, for the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs. 48 pp., paper covered. 2s. 6d.

The history of land drainage could be made into a fascinating subject, though it has to be admitted that few, if any, land drainage historians have taken their opportunity. On this account Mr Harvey's book is all the more welcome. It sets out readably, concisely, and comprehensively the story of land drainage in this country. The common error of supposing that land drainage is a Dutch importation and the giving of the paternity of land drainage to Vermuyden is avoided. Mr Harvey is well aware that drainage in Romney Marsh is probably older than drainage in the Fens, and that in the Fens much valuable work was done in the Middle Ages.

A little more attention might have been

paid to the local authorities who have been responsible for land drainage works. Their history is of interest not only because it goes back very far, but because they are among the few survivors of local authorities which exist for the carrying out of a special purpose. It may well be, however, that Mr Harvey did not think that this was a suitable topic for a booklet directed to Young Farmers' Clubs.

J. E. MAHER

GEORGE EWART EVANS, *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*. Faber and Faber, 1956. 250 pp. 25s.

This book is not history in the precise modern connotation of the word. It is scantily indexed and wholly undocumented. But it is history in the sense that Gilbert White and the Sturt-Bourne duality wrote history, at first hand, or at most second hand. And at times Mr Evans echoes more than a little of the talent which, by exact reporting and unembroidered prose, conveyed so valid a picture of Selborne and the Surrey Labourer.

The author and his wife went to live in the Suffolk village of Blaxhall in 1948 and, being observant people, soon realized the wealth of material awaiting the industrious collector of the ways of a passing, and immediately past, generation—the Victoriana and the Edwardiana of the East Anglian village. Being industrious people, they set about collecting it; and Mr Evans's narrative of the careers, habits of life, methods of work, and material and spiritual cultures of Blaxhall, as so attractively presented in *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*, makes a substantial contribution to rural history.

Much of the content of this book will be familiar in a general way to most readers: we all know of the harvest customs, the itinerant gangs of sheep-shearers, the village ways of bacon curing and brewing. What is valuable here is the precise and detailed account of how such work was done in one particular place, giving concreteness to generalization and a local home to ancient crafts. To most of us, also, these matters have become so shrouded in sentimentality as to be abhorrent:

Mr Evans, by rescuing the memories and the oral traditions of his dying neighbours and immortalizing them in print, does a considerable service in substituting for a cupid-blinded nostalgia a sober appraisal of the facets of rural Suffolk before the agricultural revolution of the last half-century. He has, as it were, photographed the visage of a drowning culture as it comes up for the last time, and not left it to the historian to reproduce its lineaments as best he can from a bare skeleton in a record office mortuary. It was a task which urgently needed to be done before it was too late; and he has done it with enough imagination, and with the mysticism of the muck-and-magic school sufficiently controlled, to turn the near-corpse of the immediate rural past into a human entity, and not an angel. There are leaky thatch and streaming walls here, beside the smell of bacon smoking in the chimney corner; and aching muscles and sodden clothes beside the home-brewed ale.

Mr Evans pins his facts on to a select few of the aged folk of Blaxhall. To Robert Savage, the seventy-five-year-old shepherd, for example, he attaches his account of the shepherding techniques and the shepherd's clothes and tools of the past three-quarters of a century. Here, as elsewhere in this book, the reporting is explicit: Savage and his contemporaries held the crook by the lower end of the handle, slid it up the near hind leg of the sheep to be caught until the thigh was wedged in it, and then by a twist of the wrist threw the sheep on its back—a method of throwing which must have led to a high incidence of blackleg in Blaxhall.

Some of the year's work with the flock unfortunately goes unreported: a long aside on Coke of Holkham, which adds nothing new to history, would willingly have been sacrificed for a description of how a Victorian shearer opened up and clipped the fleece. Mr Evans does, however, remind us that transhumance was not confined to the hills: the Suffolk shepherd also went with his flock to the saltings as, several centuries before, the *bercarius* of Wellingborough took his sheep

to the maritime marshes of Crowland abbey.

The same treatment is accorded the Blaxhall housewife with her baking, brewing, and cheesemaking (Suffolk cheese has been revived in the last year or two); the farmer with his leases, his harvest by contract, and his tools; and the villager in general with his schooling and superstitions, his customs and his dialect. It is a pity, however, that Mr Evans has thought it necessary to pad out an otherwise impeccable piece of reporting with so much conventional parochial history from the parish chest and from irrelevant periods. Without this make-weight matter *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay* would be an achievement beyond reasonable reproach; with it, the book is curate's-egg.

The physical volume itself, like all that issue from the house of Faber, bears evidence of thoughtful design. It is set in Monotype Bell and printed on good white paper with a care for evenness in impression: but the Bewick cuts selected for the chapter headpieces reproduce ill upon an inhospitably smooth paper; they have lost most of their fine detail, and in one case at least (p. 42) have been so drastically trimmed as to lose their artistic unity.

It remains only to express the hope that Mr Evans's example in rescuing the immediate past from the grave mouth long enough to paint its likeness will be followed in other regions of Britain. The result would be a corpus of material for which all future generations of rural historians could not fail to be grateful.

R. TROW-SMITH

REX C. RUSSELL, *The 'Revolt of the Field' in Lincs. The Origins and Early History of Farm Workers' Trade Unions*. Lincolnshire County Committee, National Union of Agricultural Workers. 1956. 168 pp. 2s. 6d. For half a crown this book is excellent value. It traces the history of farm workers' trade unions in Lincolnshire by means of selected extracts from local newspapers and official blue books with the minimum of interspersed commentary. The result is a lively month-by-

month account of union agitation as it can be pieced together from journalists' reports and correspondents' letters in the local press. It is essentially a tale told by contemporaries, full of their own prejudices, threats, and fears, but lacking the bias of after-knowledge. And it makes refreshing reading. Sooner or later, of course, the earnest reader and reviewer begins to feel uneasy because the contemporary account is in some respects misleading. It is an occupational disease of the professional historian to hanker for the balanced, objective, and complete account, and although he may read with enjoyment the stimulating language of the eye-witness, he cannot refrain from summoning the armchair commentator afterwards to his side to put the matter properly in perspective. The enthusiastic, but less earnest reader, however, is free to enjoy the rough and tumble of heated contemporary controversy, and can cheerfully ignore the cool-headed appraisal of the unengaged observer.

The book begins with extracts from the report of the Royal Commission on gang labour in 1867, designed to give a background picture of the working conditions of agricultural labourers. The use of this report as the only source of information is unfair, since it puts a one-sided and, in consequence, an unduly gloomy view of the situation. Gang labour was common in only two out of the four main farming regions of Lincolnshire: on the wolds and limestone heath, where turnip cultivation had led to the extensive ploughing-up of sheep walks and rabbit warrens, and in the fens, where drainage had enabled the former summer pastures to be transformed into fertile arable fields. Many new farms were carved out on these reclaimed lands, but they lacked adequate cottage accommodation for all the extra labour needed. Hence, gang labour came into existence—an innocent expedient to meet an emergency, which brought unanticipated social evils in its train. The working conditions of gang labourers were appalling, as the report of the Royal Commission makes perfectly clear, but they were not the working conditions of the typical

agricultural labourer. A few extracts from other Parliamentary Papers of the same period would have shown that Lincolnshire farm workers enjoyed unusually good working and living conditions, judged by national standards. Indeed, a number of passages in the later pages of the book admit that Lincolnshire was a high-wage county. In the early 'seventies, labourers from southern England were being encouraged by their unions to move there, and it was some time before the protests of Lincolnshire workers at the consequent lowering of their wages persuaded the unions to drop this campaign and to encourage instead emigration to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

Background matter occupies only fifteen pages of the book, however, and the rest are devoted to newspaper extracts describing the spread of unionism from the early months of 1872 onwards, the first wage successes in 1872 and 1873, the employers' lockout in 1874, the increasing flow of emigrants from Lincolnshire to the industrial north and abroad, the gradual weakening of the unions as depression deepened after 1879 until 1882 when they ceased to be an effective force. The book ends with the year 1892, when the last attempt to breathe new life into the unions had failed. "As far as we know at present," writes Mr Russell, "—and much more research needs to be done—the Lincolnshire farm-worker was unprotected by further rural trade unions until the first World War." Five appendices give a selection of songs sung at union meetings, wage rates at the Lincolnshire hirings from 1870 to 1891, population statistics for some sample parishes in the same period, sample emigration notices, and news items concerning the formation of Union Co-operative stores. On this last subject, and indeed on many others touched upon in the book, Mr Russell points out how much remains to be discovered. Indeed, he is as much concerned to instigate further research and to gather up information from living witnesses as to record the more accessible printed information. Later, perhaps, he will make his peace with the professional historian and pro-

vide the "balanced, objective, and complete account." Meanwhile, we may thank him for performing a task which could profitably be done for all counties, and, moreover, for doing it in a way that brings the agitation vividly to life, through the descriptions of eye-witnesses.

JOAN THIRSK

A. H. SMITH, *English Place-Name Elements*. Cambridge University Press, 1956. Vol. I, A-IW, lvi+306 pp.; Vol. II, J-Y, vi+418 pp. Each 35s.

In 1924 the English Place-Name Society published a slim volume of some eighty pages entitled *The Chief Elements used in English Place-Names*. The author, Sir Allen Mawer, drew attention in his preface to the heavy but unavoidable handicap under which the book suffered, of being written at the beginning of the Society's work instead of at the end. Now, thirty-three years later, the end is still not in sight, but in the meanwhile nineteen counties have been surveyed, and the quantity of material gathered by the labour of many scholars is great enough to warrant a fresh attempt at synthesis and interpretation. This the present director of the survey, Professor A. H. Smith, has accomplished in the two substantial volumes under notice.

The great historical importance of place-names is now very generally appreciated. They are living witnesses to the unrecorded history of our countryside, and where the archaeological and documentary evidences are alike scanty they become a primary source of knowledge. Any student of agrarian history who reads Professor Smith's articles on such elements as *by*, *feld*, *ham*, *leah*, *stoc*, *tun*, *thorp*, and *wic* will learn much about the shaping of the English landscape which could be learnt in no other way.

The volumes provide a comprehensive dictionary of the elements found in English place-names before the fifteenth century. They will be an indispensable work of reference for all who use the county volumes, and indeed for all students of English history, geography, and dialects. A reviewer who is not himself a specialist in this field of study

can only salute the unwearied industry and wide scholarship which have gone to the making of these volumes. It is only here and there that one notices a small omission. For example, the article on *cot* does not mention that the names of four manors in the Devonshire Domesday, three of them quite substantial properties, are compounded of this element and the names of their owners in 1066, so that here at any rate the meaning is not just 'a cottage, a humble dwelling'. On p. 87 of the first volume we read that *celce* is not recorded in Old English, but p. 278 contradicts this by citing *Celce-hyth* (=Chelsea), a well-known instance. There is at least one exception to the statement that "saints' names do not occur" in combination with *-mynster*, for Brannocmynster (=Braunton, Devon) is now known to signify the church of St Brannoc. The equation of *ceorl* with "one of the lower classes of freeman, a freeman below the class of noble, an ordinary freeman," introduces a gloss for which there is no philological warrant, and could not have been made if the author had remembered that Alfred the Great, in his translation of Orosius, uses the word as equivalent to *libertinus*, a former slave who needs a further act of emancipation to make him fully free.

It was no doubt convenient to issue the work in two volumes, but should not the pagination of a dictionary be continuous? A minor blemish, common to this and all the Society's publications, is that nowhere are we given a list of the counties which have already been surveyed. It is to be hoped that one of the blank pages at the beginning or end of future volumes will be utilized for this purpose.

H. P. R. FINBERG

H. GODWIN, *The History of the British Flora: a factual basis for phytogeography*. Cambridge University Press, 1957. viii+384 pp., illustrated. 90s.

Any worker considering the earliest impact on Britain of man as an agriculturist must have come up against the problem of what was, in fact, the native vegetation of these

islands. Dr Godwin's book provides a comprehensive survey of the available data, from which he has built up a picture of the changing flora of Britain throughout the Quaternary era. He reviews the techniques of pollen analysis and identification of other sub-fossil plant remains, by which this volume of evidence has been accumulated, and in the light of his unique experience as the pioneer of Quaternary research in Britain, he discusses the pattern of change in the British flora, and how far the changes since the last Ice Age have been the result of immigration, changing climate, and, finally, of man's influence.

The major portion of the book (224 pages out of 367) consists of detailed records of all British species, including crop plants, which have been identified from glacial and subsequent deposits. For each species, a list of localities and authorities is quoted, and many distribution maps are given. A section on cereals, pp. 262-73, based on the work of Jessen and Helbaek, presents the best modern account of the history since Neolithic times of the various types of wheat (spelts, emmer, and bread wheats), oats, barley, and rye.

In the discussion which follows the long section on records, Dr Godwin points out that our knowledge of the rich flora of the Late-glacial period (approximately 12,000 to 8,000 B.C.), acquired from recent investigations at many sites, establishes beyond doubt the native status of "many weed species hitherto thought to be introductions to the British Isles by Neolithic and later agriculturists"—e.g. *Linaria vulgaris*, *Centaurea cyanus*, etc. Species such as these, together with thistles, docks, and plantains (see Tab. VII, p. 311), flourished in the open conditions of the Late-glacial period, but were strikingly reduced and restricted in range by the post-glacial spread of forests, and only reappeared with the destruction of the forests (which were the natural climax vegetation of Britain in the post-glacial climate) by Neolithic and later man.

Dr Godwin describes the successive migration and establishment of the forest

trees in the earlier part of the post-glacial period of increasing warmth, and discusses the concept of the climatic optimum in the Atlantic period (c. 5000-3000 B.C.), followed by climatic deterioration. He emphasizes that throughout the Late-glacial and until the end of the Atlantic period, Palaeolithic and Mesolithic man was a creature dominated by his environment, and that the greatest change in man's position in the ecosystem came with the migrations of Neolithic peoples with their techniques of cultivating cereals and keeping domestic animals, which occurred in the drier Sub-boreal period which followed the Atlantic.

The sections on "The Sub-boreal period and prehistoric husbandry" and the subsequent "Sub-atlantic period and climatic deterioration" (pp. 331-45) provide a valuable summary of the evidence on the beginning of agriculture in Britain, and the effects of widespread forest clearance, which began in Neolithic times. Dr Godwin's own work on Hockham Mere provides evidence for dating the treelessness of the Breckland from the time of the Neolithic flint-miners of Grimes Graves, and he refers at length to Iversen's pioneer work on Neolithic clearances in Denmark, with his evidence for two thousand years of shifting clearance and cultivation followed by local regeneration, before the permanent widespread forest clearances of the Iron Age.

In his final pages, Dr Godwin considers briefly how the landscape and flora of Britain in historic times have resulted from the impact of successive waves of human settlement on the primeval forest and peat mires. He concludes his survey with a short consideration of Romano-British agriculture, and lists species which are regarded as having been introduced at this time, either as weeds or as economically useful plants.

WINIFRED TUTIN

MALCOLM GRAY, *The Highland Economy, 1750-1850*. Oliver and Boyd, 1957. 280 pp. 25s.

There are several reasons why the develop-

ment of the Scottish Highlands attracts the economic historian. First, it is a region which has a sufficient degree of physical, economic, and social homogeneity to prompt and justify a search for those generalizations which give regional studies their universal value; secondly, there are many useful and accessible sources of evidence, few of them squeezed too dry to quench a scholar's thirst; lastly, the process of change in the Highlands has produced moments of human drama and struggle that stir all but the stony-hearted and tempt a lowland Scot to claim Highland ancestry almost as sentimentally as an American tourist.

Yet, with all the books born out of this, the publisher's claim that Mr Gray has written the first economic history of the Highlands as a distinct region is a truthful advertisement; it is also a modest one, for *The Highland Economy* is an excellent book which deserves to be added to the (all too short) list of standard works on Scottish economic history.

The century covered by the book ended with Scottish industry almost on its feet and the highland economy almost on its knees. It is true, as Mr Gray illustrates, that in the southern and eastern parts of the Highlands the old agrarian economy became more assimilated to lowland ways and that, by 1850, many people enjoyed higher economic standards than in 1750; but in the north-west, and in the islands, the total effect was one of economic degeneration. This contrast between developments in the north-west and the south-east of the Highlands is one of the most interesting features of Mr Gray's study. Differentiation taking place within a fairly homogeneous region invariably provides useful material for social and economic analysis.

The key, according to Mr Gray, is to be found in the relations between agriculture and industry. In the south and east "industry and agriculture were conceived to have separate spheres of action" (p. 71); people were detached from the land and concentrated in towns and villages, leaving a thinner but economically viable rural population. In the north-west "the more enticing prospect was

in encouraging industries—kelp and to a lesser extent fishing—which, being intermittent and seasonal, could best grow among a peasantry still with its land and in its old settlements" (p. 72). The population grew most rapidly in the north, remaining fairly stagnant in the south and east.

No history of the Highlands can avoid discussing the landlords (in the eighteenth century over half of the land surface was owned by less than half a dozen proprietors), and Mr Gray's valuable account of the rise and fall of the kelp industry helps to reveal their directing rôle in the process of degeneration. A greater density of population on the land—which prevented any major improvements in technique—was encouraged and rents were screwed up so as to force tenants to work with kelp for piece-rate wages. Outside the kelp areas there was also a general rise in land rents before 1815 and landlords had by then greatly increased their share of the agricultural income. When cattle prices fell after this date rents remained fairly stable, large-scale

sheep-farming was developed, and only the potato enabled the Highlanders to maintain and feed their families. The potato famine of the 1840's brought disaster to the people.

Mr Gray uses his sources skilfully; he also introduces something of an innovation for Scottish agrarian historians in a statistical appendix which presents the data in an analytical way, taking us far beyond the catalogue and travelogue. Yet there is still a great deal left to be done, and here and there one wishes Mr Gray had pursued his labours even more tirelessly. There is more than "scattered information about grain prices from 1750" (p. 141), and it is hardly true that the price of oatmeal "remained almost stagnant" from 1750 to 1815 (*ibid.*). The price, wage, and rent movements of Scottish agriculture can probably be more accurately measured than is generally thought. Mr Gray's valuable work should inspire others to attempt that—and the many other—tasks in Scottish agrarian history that remain unfinished.

GEORGE HOUSTON

The British Agricultural History Society

IMPORTANT NOTICE

*As from 1 September 1957 the address of the Secretary of the
Society will change from*

c/o Museum of English Rural Life,
7 Shinfield Road, Reading

to

The Department of Agriculture, Parks Road, Oxford