

The Peers and the Provinces

By ALAN EVERITT

REVIEW ARTICLE OF LAWRENCE STONE, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965. xxiv+842 pp. £5 5s.

NOT many years since, those of us accustomed to frequent the Public Record Office sometimes used to look up, during weary moments with our own documents, and marvel at the insatiable energy of a well-known figure in the Round Room. It was Professor Stone. Interminable rolls, files, boxes, and volumes were brought up and examined with unrelenting enthusiasm and bewildering speed. It was an educational experience merely to look on. The fruit of these labours is now before us in a volume of more than 800 pages. Probably not for a long time has so much research been put by one English historian, working unaided, into a single book. The author tells us that he has scanned six miles of Close Rolls alone, and scoured the archives of seven dukes, four marquesses, thirteen earls, one viscount, and four barons, not to mention those of mere baronets and squires. Such facts are enough to humble those of us engaged in less exalted projects. They make us marvel at a display of learning at once so formidable in its range, so fecund in its ideas, so voluminous in its detail, and so persuasive in its presentation.

Professor Stone moves with consummate ease from social mobility to the inflation of honours; from the biology of decay to estate management; from sexual morality to religion; from questions of law and credit to details of munitions, duels, leases, coalmines, feudal incidents, agricultural improvements, iron smelting, fen drainage, urban development, joint-stock companies, court attendance, diplomatic missions, gambling, love-matches, and tombs. There are particularly fascinating descriptions of the world of the London moneylenders (pp. 532-8); of the

orgiastic eating habits of noble households (pp. 555-62); of the art-collecting of the Caroline peers (pp. 718-21); of the ideals governing relationships between landlord and tenant (pp. 303-7); and of the notable part of the aristocracy in financing maritime ventures, furthering metropolitan development, and exploiting the iron industry (pp. 371-2, 357-63, and 344-52). Some of the chapters in the book would have been considerable pieces of research if published alone. Taken together they provide us with a unique panorama, not only of the financial problems of the aristocracy, but of their whole manner of life. Indeed, the greatest point for praise in the book is the fact that the author refuses to see the 'crisis of the aristocracy' merely in economic terms, and studies it as the consequence of a great variety of forces, sociological and anthropological as well. This crisis he describes as one of the three main causes of the "socio-political breakdown of 1640-2," the other two being the decline in respect for and obedience to the monarchy and the failure of the Church of England to be adequately comprehensive (pp. 12-13). Quite clearly we have in this volume a very considerable addition to our knowledge of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Yet I am not altogether happy about *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*. One turns to criticism with hesitation, the more so because the shadows of doubt which will from time to time arise are often dispelled by the author's powers of persuasion and his formidable learning. Yet there is a danger of being dazzled by the pyrotechnics and abandoning a sense of proportion. I do not myself feel convinced that the crisis was quite so catastrophic as the author appears to think, or that it was quite so central to the issues fought out in the Great Rebellion. Was the economic

position of the aristocrats of the kingdom, taken by themselves, quite so dramatic as a study on this scale seems to imply? The problem is complicated by the fact that the author is not always consistent in his use of the term 'aristocracy'. As he frankly admits, he sometimes uses it—quite legitimately—to include untitled members of the court *élite* and the greater country landlords as well as the peerage (p. 2). Most of the voluminous (and often fascinating) statistical evidence which forms the framework of the book, however, relates to noblemen alone, so that it is important to see the peers' stake in the landed wealth of the kingdom in perspective.

Some tentative figures for a single county may help to keep a sense of proportion. A provisional analysis of the income of 135 landed families in Kent about 1640 shows that the average income of the peers was £4,089, of baronets £1,405, of knights £873, and of the untitled gentry £270. In the county as a whole there were 10 peers, 31 baronets, 50 knights, and about 750 untitled gentry. Of the total landed wealth of the shire, then, it appears that the peers, baronets, and knights as a group each received about 12 or 13 per cent, and the untitled gentry as a whole about 61 per cent.¹ How far do these figures represent conditions in England generally? No very positive answer, of course, is possible. At the time the wealth of the gentry in Kent was regarded as proverbial, though in fact it was not very dissimilar, class for class, to that of landowners in Yorkshire or in such counties of the Lowland Zone as Suffolk and Northamptonshire.² There were certainly more baronets and knights in Kent than in most counties; but the number of peers was

also exceptionally great. In proportion to the size of the shire, on the other hand, the total number of minor gentry was not very different from that of other lowland counties, for example Suffolk, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, and Somerset.³ It is possible, then, that these figures were not wholly untypical and that the peerage in 1640 did not hold more than about one-eighth of the landed wealth of the kingdom as a whole.⁴ This is one of many points raised by this volume on which more local research is necessary before definite answers can be advanced.

What disturbs me in the book, however, is not simply a doubt about the magnitude of the crisis. Too frequently a certain tendency to exaggeration seems to mar other important topics upon which the author has so much that is illuminating to say. I found some of his comments and assumptions about life in the provinces, in particular, quite misleading. It is true that he is not primarily concerned with rural conditions; but they form the background to much that is advanced in this volume. Many statements specifically relate to country magnates, and in fact most of the peers themselves need to be regarded as provincial grandees as well as courtiers—more so, I think, than Professor Stone sometimes allows. To anyone at all acquainted with the half-lights of local history and the confusion of motives involved in most historical movements in the provinces, the conclusions which the author draws from the evidence sometimes seem over-dramatized and his psychological analysis excessively simplified and unsympathetic. So many things are described in such words as immense, extravagant, appalling, magnificent, astonishing, or

¹ For the basis and sources of these figures see my book *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60*, 1966, pp. 41, 329. Absolute accuracy cannot, of course, be claimed for them, but I think they provide a reasonably reliable guide to the scale of income in Kent. Professor Stone (p. 762) calculates the average net income of the peerage in 1641 as £5,040. In Kent this would give the nobility 15 per cent, instead of 12 per cent, of the total landed income of the county.

² *Bull. Inst. Hist. Research*, xxxiv, 1961, p. 106; Alan Everitt, *Suffolk and the Great Rebellion, 1640-1660*, Suffolk Records Soc., III, 1960, p. 16. There is a good deal of useful evidence of the estimated incomes of gentry in the biographical section of M. F. Keeler, *The Long Parliament, 1640-1641*, 1954.

³ But in the much larger county of Yorkshire there were only 679 gentry in 1642, on Dr J. T. Cliffe's computation.—*Bull. Inst. Hist. Research*, xxxiv, 1961, p. 106.

⁴ This, of course, is at the end of Professor Stone's period of crisis. But according to his figures (p. 762) by that date the average net income of the peers, in real terms, had regained its 1559 level.

crazy that, if not stunned into acquiescence, one begins to wonder whether they were really quite so novel or unparalleled.

For example, while granting the copious evidence of violence and ill health in the sixteenth century, were people really always "so exceedingly irritable," with their nerves "perpetually on edge, possibly because they were nearly always ill" (p. 224)? There is a natural weakness among diarists to fill their pages with tales of misery and misfortune rather than the ordinary routine of life. Epistolary evidence, in the nature of things, tends to be pathological. But even so I cannot say I have found these statements altogether verified in the diaries and family correspondence that I am familiar with. Again, while there may be much to indicate an "explosive demand for office" after 1585 in contemporary manuscript lists of offices and fees, of which 60 are said to exist, one wonders how it is possible to know that such lists "found their way into *almost every* substantial country house in England" (p. 467: my italics). Or again, while no one who has worked on English trade is likely to idealize the Tudor and Stuart merchant, one wonders if he really always "spent his life in cut-throat competition, squeezing the last penny out of every one with whom he came in contact. . ." (p. 47). Even merchants, occasionally, seem to have been human. Or yet again, after a colourful account of the violence, murders, and pitched battles of noble families and their retainers who "lived perpetually in the precincts of war," it is disconcerting to find on a later page—where it becomes necessary to point a contrast—that apparently this fighting "was not much more dangerous than all-in wrestling" (pp. 227–34, 242). Which view is correct?

Similar defects mar Professor Stone's remarks about 'status'. Obviously the concern for social standing was a primary preoccupation of the period, although in the provinces it was often, I think, as much passive and traditional—a determination to preserve the

family's *status quo*—as dynamic and aggressive. There is a good deal of truth in the old gibe that the history of England is the history of snobbery. The Jacobean prodigy houses like Hardwick and Wollaton bear witness to it in its most extravagant guise. The total of £92,000 said to have been spent upon two Kentish mansions alone—Cobham Hall and Hothfield Place—was no doubt largely dedicated to the desire to impress.¹ Yet the mania for status is a theme and motive which Professor Stone perhaps tends to overplay. Is it not sometimes possible to discern beyond the snobbery of a Cobham or Hardwick something of "that restless and unsleeping sense of beauty" of the period?² Apparently not. These "white elephants" were merely put up "to demonstrate status," "to satisfy a lust for power," or to sublimate "thwarted political ambition." "Miserable to live in," erected at "appalling cost," and "hideous inconvenience," these "fantastic edifices still lie heavily about the English countryside like the fossilized bones of the giant reptiles of the Carboniferous Age" (pp. 551–3). All very amusing, and not altogether unjustifiable; but betraying, perhaps, a certain lack of balance, and an insensitivity to the genius of the age.

The truth is that the whole question of 'status' or 'standing' in this period has to be viewed in relation to the needs and functions of society as a whole as well as from the viewpoint of individual motive. Phrases like conspicuous consumption, social prestige, status-symbol, acquisitive process, and power *élite*—which we all sometimes find convenient, and which occur in this book perhaps too frequently—are not sufficient to explain it. After all, in our day, even that horrid status symbol, a prestige office-block, is not built *merely* to impress the public, or entirely apart from use and purpose. Similarly in the seventeenth century the function of a country house was not always merely that of a status symbol.

The famous Jacobean 'prodigy houses' of the English countryside, such as Cobham and

¹ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p. 555; Everitt, *Community of Kent*, p. 29.

² Cf. A. L. Rowse, *The England of Elizabeth*, 1964 edn, p. 5.

Hardwick, can in fact be rather misleading in this connexion. Most of the aristocracy did not inhabit such palaces. Many of the country houses of the time—in some counties, such as Suffolk, Kent, and Leicestershire, the vast majority—were not mushroom growths of this kind, entirely newly created and unrelated to their environment. They were rambling, patchwork affairs which had grown up gradually with the centuries; they were still intimately bound up with local society, and were essentially expressions of a changing but still traditional and generally accepted authority. Such houses as Scots' Hall and Penshurst Place in Kent, or Nevill Holt in Leicestershire, of many dates and styles from the fourteenth century onwards, were in fact far more typical of the provincial magnate's home than the much-trumpeted Wollatons and Burghleys of the Midlands. They were more usually, it is true, the homes of middling and major gentry than of peers. Yet many of the peers, too, were country magnates as well as courtiers. Their expenditure, as Dr Mingay has remarked of the aristocracy of the following century, "was not all sheer extravagance and waste, for it was closely linked with the political and governmental system, as well as with the social structure. Probably only a minority of landlords relished ostentation as an end in itself. The more discerning saw it to be inherent in their social position and political functions, something essential to their role in society. . ."¹ Whether we like it or not, the country houses of many of the Jacobean aristocracy were centres of those 'county commonwealths' which went to make up the community of the realm. They need to be studied from this point of view, as well as from that of their significance in the history of class conflict.

A kindred topic on which Professor Stone is sometimes misleading, as well as often penetrating, is the hypersensitivity of the age

to 'reputation' (p. 42). To say that "active personal occupation in a trade or profession was generally thought to be humiliating" (p. 39) and that "buying and selling on the internal market was petty huckstering, and beneath the dignity of a gentleman" (p. 336) is really too *simpliste* a view of this sensitivity. No doubt such views were prevalent among the peerage; but Professor Stone extends them to the aristocracy generally. I grant his illustrative examples; I admit that many country gentlemen would have subscribed to such opinions after 1660; and some of his references (e.g., on p. 40) in fact relate to the latter half of the seventeenth century. Before 1640, however, in many parts of England, it was not in the least unusual for gentry to have business connexions, to attend fairs and markets in person, and to keep careful accounts of the buying and selling of cattle and corn from their own farms. In Suffolk leading gentry such as the Barnardistons, and in Kent families like the Twysdens and Tokes, were frequently to be seen on market days in the streets of Bury St Edmunds, Ashford, and Maidstone. In Leicestershire, according to Defoe about the turn of the century, "most of the gentlemen are graziers, and in some places the graziers are so rich that they grow gentlemen. . ."² In Northamptonshire, with its exceptional proportion of new families—usually more crusty over status than the old—the connexion between the gentry and trade was perhaps less manifest. Yet, quite as often as in other counties, the younger sons of Northamptonshire families like the Knightleys, Norwiches, Pickerings, Thorntons, Thursbys, and Scattergoods became merchants, goldsmiths, grocers, drapers, stationers, and chandlers. The position of these sons in the hierarchy was always subordinate to that of the family head; but I very much doubt if they brought any sense of humiliation to their parents.³

¹ G. E. Mingay, *Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1963, p. 161.

² Everitt, *Suffolk and the Great Rebellion*, pp. 17–18; *Community of Kent*, p. 28; Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through England and Wales*, Everyman edn, 1959, II, p. 89.

³ Cf. Alan Everitt, 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, no. 33, April 1966, p. 68. Professor Stone admits (p. 40) that in the later seventeenth century younger sons of magnates

The development of the family as a circle of authority, affection, and education is one of the most notable themes in the social history of the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. It was closely connected with the growth of domestic pietism in England, not only amongst Puritans, where it is well known, but amongst Anglicans too, especially during the years of eclipse in 1642-60—a fact which is too little recognized. The development of home life in this period is indeed a theme which needs far wider and more scholarly investigation than it has yet received. For this reason Professor Stone's suggestive pages about the domestic life of the peerage are especially welcome. Particularly valuable is the way in which he traces, more fully than his predecessors, the increasing emphasis on privacy and intimacy, the withdrawal of the family from the hall to the great chamber and dining-room, and the growth in "humanity and respect for the individual" in the 1630's-50's (pp. 669, 651).

Unfortunately, from time to time suspicions once again creep in that the pattern of change and the human motives behind it have been strangely simplified and uncomfortably forced into a statistical strait-jacket. Possibly conditions amongst the nobility were so different from those among other landed magnates, with whose papers I am more familiar, that one's doubts are unfounded. It may be true among the peerage that "the number of unions of stepchildren suggests that mothers who remarried were dangerously ready to surrender their children to the family of their new husbands" (p. 604). But is it not possible to find more various causes at work? Certainly one sometimes can amongst the leading gentry in the provinces: the young people's propinquity, for example, and a parent's not inhuman desire to provide for a daughter's future. And is the evidence really sufficient to give a valid statistical answer to the question whether parents and children "put money before other considerations" in choosing a partner (p. 617)? Apparently it is. The author

calculates that between 1600 and 1659 34 per cent of the older peerage married heiresses, compared with only 20 per cent in 1540-99. We are then asked to believe that it was financial embarrassment that actuated them, and that it drove them into "a far more single-minded pursuit of wealthy marriages than had previously been their custom." Possibly; in some cases certainly; but it seems a hazardous conclusion when so baldly put. May not chance or affection have occasionally played a part, or even a larger supply of heiresses? And what about the 66 per cent who even in 1600-59 did *not* marry heiresses? Our intellectual Fonthills, it seems, are sometimes built on slender foundations.

One of the predominant themes running through this book is the polarity between 'Court' and 'Country'. The subject is an important one, and Professor Stone has brought together a vivid miscellany of facts in illustration of it. We all know that in Charles I's reign the court nobility lived in a different world from that of the country gentry: the one rooted in London and some kind of service, real or supposed, to the state, the other in the shires and some kind of service to the parish or county. The wealth of evidence adduced in these pages goes far to explain why the animosity between the two, under the Stuarts, became so acute. Yet as one reads on it becomes clear that the author's analysis lacks the subtleties, the lights and shades, of real life. Professor Stone proves his point that respect for the peerage in general was on the decline. It is indisputable that the fear of court popery was widespread, at least in the more puritanical areas. But so far as opinion in the counties I have studied is concerned, it is going much too far to say, without qualification, that "Because so many peers were Catholics, suspicion was thrown upon the class as a whole," or that "sexual licence became ineradicably associated with the aristocracy and with the Court" (pp. 743, 668). Similarly, though I think that attempts to prove that the Rise of the Gentry was an illu-

were put out to trade, but he thinks this can "hardly be regarded as more than a very trifling shift of opinion."

sion are misguided,¹ it seems to me very unguarded to say that most of the greater gentry "were second- or third-generation *nouveaux-riches*" (p. 184). In some counties, such as Northamptonshire, many of them were; but this was far from being universally true.

Again, the inflation of honours under James I was no doubt a disgraceful development; yet it is an over-simplification to say, *tout court*, that "the squirearchy were furious at having to give way to a mob of knights often of low birth and mean estate" (p. 124). Some honours undoubtedly were bestowed on unworthy families, and everywhere one can find a few vociferous malcontents, like the Weldons and the Sedleys in Kent, enraged by any exaltation of their neighbours. Yet in general the peerages, baronetcies, and knighthoods, at least in the midland, southern, and eastern counties I am familiar with, were bestowed on the more prominent and well-endowed local families: Twysdens, Tuftons, Sidneys, Barnardistons, Knightleys, Norwiches, Derings, and Oxindens, for example. Or once again, though it is true that in Charles I's reign "the country gentry continued to put up their conventional, comfortable Jacobethan houses as if these revolutionary buildings [of Inigo Jones] did not exist," can it really be demonstrated that they did so because they "associated Inigo Jones with the popery, tyranny, and vice which they believed to be the predominant characteristics of the Caroline Court" (p. 712)? No doubt some of them did so; but it is an interesting fact that in one county where a number of novel and palladian houses were erected in the early seventeenth century, several were built by families notably hostile to the Court, like the Sedleys of St Clere. For such provincial people there is no reason to think that artistic predilection always immediately earthed to political prin-

ciple or religious prejudice. Was there any reason why it should do so?

I am afraid, however, that the author's impressions of English provincial life seem to me to lay too much stress on its relations with the Court. In fact, except in time of crisis, antagonism to the Court was rarely more than a latent force in the countryside at large: a force that sometimes manifested itself vigorously during critical periods like 1640-2, but one that did not normally engross the provincial mind in the way some historians have supposed. Quite certainly one cannot make any simple identification of the divisions of the Great Rebellion with those between 'Court' and 'Country' before 1640, since much of the deepest 'country'—in the north, the south, and Wales—in so far as it supported any party, supported the king. Equally certainly it is a mistake to identify the views of 'the Country', as Professor Stone sometimes seems to, with those of the little oligarchies of puritanical and politically minded families, like the Cromwells and Hampdens, or Pym and Warwick, whose passionate discontents fixed their minds on the misdeeds of St James's. Such groups did not represent the general sense of 'the Country', even amongst the gentry, except possibly in parts of East Anglia. The pressure of events in the 1630's drove many provincial gentry, it is true, into temporary alignment with them, just as events drove provincials into alignment with the Cavaliers in 1659-60. But the brevity of the union, in each period of crisis, showed that there was little fundamental agreement between these various sections of society. As the real divisions of the community emerged during the Civil War, and as the counties either endeavoured to stand neutral or split up on lines often cutting across the Court-Country cleavage, it became evident that these puritan family-cliques were no more

¹ But the figures cited by Professor Stone on p. 67, indicating the numbers of gentry, seem to be rather questionable. I am not altogether clear what significance he sees in the fact that after 1660 over 400 people in Kent were summoned to prove their claim to bear arms. But certainly this figure does not mean that there were 400 newcomers in the county since the previous visitation of 1619. The Heralds' Visitations are in fact of little use for estimating the number of gentry in many counties. In Kent they include neither all the gentry nor all the newcomers. Many old families ignored the Heralds' summons altogether, although many others attended their sessions; there is in fact no consistent pattern.

representative of provincial feeling as a whole than were the Court cliques of 1603-40, or the Cavalier groups of 1659-60.

Provincial life in general was, quite simply, interested in other things. Politics only touched the fringes of it, only concerned it spasmodically, only converted a minority of its inhabitants into implacable partisans. For the country gentry of the Northamptonshire uplands, for the yeomen of the Weald, for the townsmen of Leicester, for the farming squires of the south-west, for the husbandmen of the Yorkshire dales—the kind of people who really *were* 'the Country'—Westminster was usually only at the periphery of existence. After all, it would have taken most of them two or three days to reach it by any ordinary conveyance. It was the ploughing, reaping, cheese-making, marketing, weaving, building, tanning, and brewing by which they lived, and all that web of personal life that held their families and society itself together, that occupied the thoughts of provincial people in general. Yet in the long run their very remoteness from politics had a profound effect on the political history of the kingdom. For it was usually the disturbance of the routine of country life that made them intervene in times of crisis. And ultimately it was the sheer intractability of local society that defeated Cromwell, as it had defeated Charles I.

Closely connected with the antagonism between Court and Country, though essentially distinct from it, was that between the metropolis and the provinces. On this topic Professor Stone has some important evidence to add to Professor F. J. Fisher's familiar article on 'The Development of London as a Centre of conspicuous Consumption'.¹ The number of mercers in the capital, for example, is said to have risen from 30 to 300 in the second half of the sixteenth century, and by 1618 there were no fewer than 148 foreign tailors

in the metropolis. "The phenomenal growth of London was largely due to its unique role as a centre for luxury goods and professional services—doctors and lawyers, actors and bear-wards, drapers and silkmen, scriveners and money-lenders, goldsmiths and jewellers all prospered exceedingly" (p. 585).

Yet the general impression left by the author's account of London's place in the economy (especially on pp. 385-403) once again seems to me exaggerated. Great as it was, we have to remember that in 1640 the capital was no more than half the size of modern Bristol, and it probably numbered no more than 6 or 7 per cent of the total population. Locally its impact on the rural economy was often intense, as in East Suffolk or the Isle of Thanet. But it was not equally diffused throughout all parts of the kingdom, or even throughout south-eastern England. Quite close to London, for example, in Holmesdale and much of the Kentish downland, the ancient ways still lingered surprisingly: just as they do today in the Wicklow Mountains near Dublin. Local society in whole tracts of countryside, both in Kent and farther afield, remained largely unaffected, directly at least, by metropolitan development. One cannot in fact properly speak, as Professor Stone does, of the general "social mores of London and the home counties" in contrast with the rest of England in the seventeenth century (p. 610; my italics).² Certainly people in Kent were not conscious of many common assumptions shared with people in London or Essex or Hertfordshire, except in the parishes immediately adjacent to the capital. Everything, in fact, depended on the form and tenacity of the local society concerned and the strength of its customs and its family life. In much of the south and east of England, as well as the north and west, society was still very deep-rooted at most of its levels, from gentry down to labourers.

¹ *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 4th ser., xxx, 1948. Professor Stone also produced valuable evidence of the great expansion of luxury imports into London in his article 'Elizabethan Overseas Trade', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., II, 1949, p. 49.

² It would require much more evidence, and from more intimately informed sources, than the quotation from Sir John Wynn of Gwydir to prove Professor Stone's view on this matter.

Again, though one can well believe that, for the peerage, London was becoming a "central matrimonial clearing house" in the late sixteenth century, it is a considerable overstatement to say, without qualification, that "for the squirearchy the contacts provided by the increasingly popular London season offered similar opportunities" (p. 624). For a few it did; but they formed only a very small proportion of the gentry as a whole in such counties as Kent.¹ Only 7 per cent of the 170 leading Kentish families in Charles I's reign married Londoners; more than two-thirds married amongst their neighbours in the shire and a further 10 per cent just across the border in Sussex or Surrey. Amongst the minor gentry local marriages were still more frequent, and in East Kent almost universal.² Despite many high-sounding royal proclamations, only a very small minority of the gentry, as distinct from the peerage, as yet attended the London season. To judge from such family papers of the time as I am familiar with, most of them had little wish to do so. And quite certainly the inhabitants of country houses who were denied the blessings of metropolitan society did not always suffer from those torments of boredom, loneliness, and melancholia to which Professor Stone supposes they were so prone. Still less were their pursuits necessarily so boorish, oafish, and clownish as he suggests (e.g., pp. 388, 401-2). Every society has its boors, not ex-

cluding the academic world. But there were also any number of provincial families, such as the Oxindens, Barnardistons, Twysdens, and Sondeses, who found their loyalties, duties, and affections principally satisfied in governing their estates, farming their demesnes, ruling their counties, reading, writing, gardening, building, adorning their houses, and bringing up a family: not altogether boorish occupations. If it had not been so, their part in the Civil War, not to mention the subsequent history of England, would be very hard to explain.

I should not like to end this article, however, on a critical note. Much of what seems to me in this volume a lack of understanding of the structure and genius of provincial society, and at times of the functions of the aristocracy within it, is not so much the fault of the author as of the state of our knowledge. His vast and valiant labours show more vividly than ever our crying need for thorough and imaginative studies of those countless *local* communities—of town and county, of village and hamlet, in dale and moor, in fen and forest—which lived out their own half-separate lives over so many centuries of English history. Though important advances have been made in this field in recent years, we are as yet only beginning to explore that provincial world which shaped the lives and minds of the vast majority of our ancestors.

¹ Probably also in Sussex: Mrs Hutchinson remarks, of her own Sussex forebears, "that it had been such a continued custom for my ancestors to take wives at home, that there was scarce a family of any note in Sussex to which they were not by intermarriages nearly related. . ."—*Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, Everyman edn, 1965, p. 7. I owe this reference to Mr David Palliser. It would require a good deal of research to establish how long this custom continued in Sussex, but I should be surprised if it was very different from Kent in this respect. Mrs Hutchinson's own mother, however, was not a native of the county. Professor Stone admits that local marriages were prevalent amongst the gentry in the sixteenth century, but states (p. 624) that London's growth as a matrimonial clearing house "finally broke down this regionalism" in the late sixteenth century.

² Everitt, *Community of Kent*, p. 328.