

Book Reviews

ROBERT TROW-SMITH, *Society and the Land*.
The Cresset Press. 252 pp. 18s.

It is to be feared that Mr Trow-Smith's new book will find little favour with the 'scientific' historian, for the book is not an impartial presentation of both sides of a question based on the meticulous weighing of all the available historical evidence. On the contrary, Mr Trow-Smith is disarmingly frank about his intentions, telling us in his preface that he makes no apology for intruding his personal opinions into his historical tale "because in the last resort the proper relation between society and its agriculture is a matter of opinion and not of fact."

Society and the Land traces the impact of society on land and of land on society from the days of the Saxon pioneers to the present day. Three main historical periods are distinguished: that in which the pioneers farmed for their own subsistence; that in which the land was venerated as the source of social dignity by the great men of the nation; and that in which farming for profit led to the eclipse of the landlord and to the commercialization of the land.

In contrast to the rest of the book, the six chapters dealing with these three main periods are commendably objective and reasonably non-controversial. They certainly show that Mr Trow-Smith knows his facts and respects them. And they also show that he can re-tell a familiar story and retain the reader's interest. He is particularly skilful in two things. First, he has the happy knack of striking a very modern note in describing centuries'-old debates, e.g. some of the proposals in the *Common Weal* of Henry VIII's reign smack of "the manipulation of the market of the modern Keynesian thinkers"; the authorities of the city of London are shown to have practised "bulk-buying" as early as 1600. Second, he is a master of the illuminatingly apt quotation, though it must also be stated that he is tantalizing in his contempt for references. (Incidentally, the book is not only

entirely without references, it also lacks an index.)

In the four last chapters, dealing with "modern times" and bringing the story up to 1953, Mr Trow-Smith is less concerned with the writing of social and economic history than with the development of his thesis that since the repeal of the Corn Laws Britain has followed "strange industrial gods which have brought her near to bankruptcy." While he is wise enough not to don the prophet's mantle, he nevertheless makes it plain that he believes we are now on the threshold of a fourth phase in the relation of society and land—a phase in which "agriculture is becoming the means of national subsistence."

Whether one agrees with Mr Trow-Smith's case or not one must admit that he can state it with formidable interest. Moreover, his argument never lapses into any of the mysticism and the nostalgic sentimentality which characterizes the writings of the 'fundamentalists' who share his views on the influence of industrialization and free imports on the fortunes of the land and of the people of Britain.

EDGAR THOMAS

E. W. MARTIN, *The Secret People*. Phoenix House Ltd. 1954. 319 pp. 21s.

Although this book is subtitled "English village life after 1750, being an account of English people, their lives, work, and development through a period of two hundred years," its main interest lies in its description of village life today and its analysis of the problems which confront those who live in villages—the secret people—together with suggestions for the solution of these problems. The author does not confine his attention narrowly to the conduct of agriculture but casts his net more widely, discussing rural crafts and industries, education, and the part played by women in rural society. The village craftsman, the village school, and the Women's Institute each receive critical ap-

praisal. A discussion of the changing roles and circumstances of the four main figures in the countryside—the squire or landowner, the parson, the farmer, and the labourer—together with that shady fifth, the poacher—over the last two hundred years provides the background for the author's discussion of the current problems of the countryside. This is not history for its own sake but a study of the past in order to understand the present and to be able to prescribe for the future.

For Mr Martin, the main issue is that of rural depopulation. How can the rural exodus be halted? In this volume he is concerned with the village; the problems of the country town are to be considered in a companion volume. The answer for the village is to refocus cultural life within the village itself, to revivify the village so that it will be able to stave off the counter-attraction of the town. Four main problems of special importance for every parish call for action: (a) education and recreation; (b) religion; (c) industrial development; and (d) the disappearance of the peasant. In education, Mr Martin looks to the village college, on the lines of the Cambridge-shire experiment, to become "the fructifying centre of village cultural life." In religion he finds the key to the situation is the country parson. With the disappearance of the squire, only the parson can give the village the leadership it needs. The man required "will not be a sporting parson, not a games master, or an organizer of fantastic revels, but a thinker prepared to take his ideas out into the open and fight for them." Only he can provide the stimulation of village life *from the inside* which is its present need. Thirdly, to restore hope to the village, new industries—either light industries such as plastics, clothing, jam-making, or rural trades and crafts—must be established in the country to provide an outlet for craftsmanship, seasonal employment for farm workers, and regular jobs for "the lusty young women" who would otherwise go to work in the towns.

Education, religion, and industrial development can give renewed purpose to village life, but the reorganization of these will

not of itself keep the country worker on the land. This, in Mr Martin's view, can only be achieved by giving the rural worker—the peasant—more land of his own to cultivate, if necessary with State aid, as a practical recognition of his worth as a cultivator of the soil. There may be doubts about the practicability of such advice. The smallholding may be appropriate for certain kinds of husbandry but it is unlikely to be capable of universal application. Moreover, mechanization and modernization require capital beyond the normal resources of the 'peasant'. Nor can this recommendation find support from the historical narrative, one of whose main strands is the account of the disappearance of the peasant.

Finally, how can these changes be brought about? Here the main question is the role of planning. Does planning provide a glorious opportunity for their attainment or an inimical threat to the well-being of the countryside? Mr Martin looks for a system which will not only be expert but which will also make the local people feel that they have a real share in creating and influencing their future.

While Mr Martin is at home in the present-day village and writes with knowledge and sympathy of current problems, his work is of little value for the agricultural historian. Though he acknowledges bibliographical assistance in his preface, his book shows almost no acquaintance with the writings of the last twenty-five years. While the blurb on the jacket speaks of the second wave of enclosures, the book is innocent of any mention of the first. Enclosure was not a long and slow process but a revolutionary development after 1750. Nor do regional or local differences receive recognition. For Mr Martin, England before 1750 was "champion country, unenclosed." Further, since the squire, the farmer, and the labourer receive separate treatment, the discussion of problems is fragmented, contradictions abound, and repetition is frequent. The open-field system is seen through a romantic haze, while the account of the eighteenth-century enclosure movement follows in the main the school cer-

tificate answer of yesteryear. On other issues Mr Martin is equally old-fashioned. The appraisal of the contribution of Jethro Tull takes no account of Professor T. H. Marshall's criticisms and is therefore more fulsome than is nowadays the wont. Finally, the balance of the book is distorted. Much space is devoted to retelling the story of the village labourer to about 1830, but little is devoted to the subsequent features of English agrarian history. The chapter on the squire, for example, virtually ends in 1843, and the effect of foreign competition which forced after 1875 such changes in the conduct of English agriculture receives scanty treatment.

Mr Martin is aware of the defects and disadvantages as well as the virtues and attractions of country life, but he has not been able to impose a consistent interpretation on his book. A wide range of opinions receives mention but all points of view are given equal weight. In the end the reader is left to reach his own conclusions from the mass of conflicting arguments. However, if the book provokes further thought on the present problems of English rural society, it will not have been written in vain.

W. E. MINCHINTON

C. S. ORWIN, *A History of English Farming*.
Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1949. 152 pp.
8s. 6d.

To cover the whole history of farming in one short volume of 152 pages is no mean feat of compression, and to make it interesting and digestible requires the practised hand. In Dr Orwin's hands this feat is accomplished so easily that we are apt to forget the artistry, the wide scholarship, and the sense of humour that went to make up the final successful performance.

The underlying theme of much of the book is the saga of the open fields, and here Dr Orwin is on ground that he has made his own. His lively description of the beginnings of the open fields, meadows, and commons of the early medieval village brings to life every detail of a way of life and communal farming that lasted for hundreds of years, when vil-

lages were tiny oases of cultivation in a vast area of forest and waste and lived entirely on their own resources. To all who are interested in Domesday this description of the medieval village will bring an invaluable insight into the Domesday scene as the jurors responsible for the making of the survey saw it.

Dr Orwin's saga begins at the first ploughing of the strips in the open fields and ends when the enclosures did away with these strips and formed them into a chequerboard of farms and fields enclosed by fences as we know them today. All the chief causes of the gradual change in the manorial and open-field system are passed in review: the services the tenant had to perform as rent for his strips and their gradual commutation for a cash payment; the labour shortage after the Black Death which made it easy for the peasant to demand freedom from these services, since he was for once in a good bargaining position; the drift of the dissatisfied away from the manor to the towns, where they gained their freedom but lost their security from want and had no one to care if they starved in bad times. The shortage of labour reduced the area of the arable and increased the grass, so that the traditional routine of the open fields was broken, and both lord and larger tenant kept as many sheep as they could, and so made more money with less labour. Their success often ruined the humbler peasants, who lost their stubble and fallow grazing for their sheep and their common rights for their cow.

The enormous increase of the population of the towns, with their extra million mouths to feed, was the spur which led to the drainage of the Fens, the Somerset marshes, the cultivation of Exmoor, and the enclosing of the open fields and later of the moors, commons, and woodlands all over England. In this enclosure the larger claimants got blocks of land which they could lay out in farms and fields for letting or their own occupation, but Dr Orwin points out that the little parcels of the smaller holders were useless to them as they could not afford to fence them, and in any case they were too small to produce corn

and also feed their sheep and cow. In desperation they sold out and migrated to the towns. The injustice to the smallholders seemed at the time a reasonable price to pay for the great improvement to farming as a whole, but it was to have serious repercussions later on.

For a while enclosed farming prospered, thanks to new inventions, new breeds of stock, new crops, and a number of pioneers who took advantage of all these things. We are given excellent descriptions of the work of all these inventors, breeders and pioneers who brought in the Golden Age of farming. In his last chapter Dr Orwin describes how the doings of the four partners in farming—the landlord, the tenant, the farm worker, and the Government—reacted upon each other, and we realize how the descendants of those who were unfortunate enough at the time of the enclosures to lose their stake in the land voted for cheap food. Regardless of what damage it might do to British farming, they brought pressure on the government to allow the farm produce of the new world to flood the home markets and ruin many British farmers. In spite of the lesson of two wars, the ghosts of the dispossessed at the enclosures still haunt the fields, and the cry for cheap food from abroad still rings in our industrial cities.

T. BEDFORD FRANKLIN

T. BEDFORD FRANKLIN, *A History of Scottish Farming*. Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1952. 194 pp. 12s. 6d.

The earliest evidence for the practice of husbandry in Scotland is supplied by archaeologists working in the Northern Islands. The excavation of the Early Bronze Age village of Skara Brae in Orkney, by Gordon Childe, disclosed a settled community, its members supporting themselves on the produce of their flocks and herds and by fishing—"being as comfortable and as well fed, probably, in 1500 B.C.," Mr Franklin suggests, "as in many a dwelling in these far-off regions only a hundred years ago." Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that with the addition of some primitive

form of soil cultivation, this type of farming has persisted in the Islands and in the Glens up to the present day.

Invaders who spread across southern Scotland between 300 and 200 B.C. grew corn, but Mr Franklin quotes Caesar for the statement that at the time of the Roman invasion the soil was not cultivated for food. It was not until after the Romans had left Britain that Irish immigrants in Iona, amongst whom St Columba had settled, re-introduced a system of tillage and grain-growing.

It was to the settlement in Scotland of colonies of monks, particularly of the Cistercian Order, that the early improvements in farming are due. They reclaimed wastes, turned barren lands into fertile soil, and were alike flockmasters, stockbreeders, foresters, gardeners, and millers. In common with the Benedictines, they organized farm labour by lay brethren living in hamlets on the land, each occupying a few acres, the tribal element in social life being absent. The rule of the monasteries was peaceful, they were centres of law and order, and civilizing agencies in what, elsewhere, was a wild and turbulent country. A recognized authority on monastic life in Scotland, Mr Franklin has much to say on what its medieval agriculture owed to the Church. Right up to the time of the Union in 1707, however, poverty and misery seem to have characterized the countryside. The Scottish peasant farmers laboured under grievous burdens in the form of payments in kind and in services for rents and for the parson's tenth, for the delivery of corn to the laird's customers perhaps fifteen miles away, and life was reduced to the lowest margin of subsistence.

Improvements followed the Union, and the next century tells the story of the slow emergence of the country from a state of semi-starvation. Increasing intercourse with England provided travellers with demonstrations of better crop rotations and better farming methods, and the wealthier lairds followed their opposite numbers south of the Border in developing an enthusiasm for agricultural improvement. Progress was most rapid in the

southern and eastern countries. The policy of the Government after the defeat of the Young Pretender at Culloden, however, applied as it was to the destruction, once and for all, of the power of the clans, brought disaster to whole communities of clansmen in the Glens. Mr Franklin repeats the terrible story of the Highland Clearances, showing singular tenderness towards those landlords responsible for these barbarous acts by withholding their names. Thus, great consolidated holdings, grazed by immense flocks of sheep tended by alien shepherds, displaced some 45,000 crofters during the latter part of the eighteenth century, whose stock had been stolen, their homes burned, and they themselves turned adrift to sink or swim as best they might. It is not without interest to note that some three hundred years before there had been parallel action in England. Recent research by Dr W. G. Hoskins in Leicestershire social history has shown how landowners in the great Midland plain conducted wholesale evictions in Tudor times in which village communities were blotted out very much in the same way, to make room for the profitable sheep industry and the production of wool.

In his preface Mr Franklin notes that his method has been to concentrate, so far as possible, on the achievement of individuals for the elucidation of Scottish agricultural history, and this is particularly evident in his account of the work of the Scottish improvers in the past hundred and fifty years, which, he proudly claims, enabled them ultimately to surpass English farming methods. His book has a useful bibliography and a fair index.

C. S. ORWIN

EDITH H. WHETHAM, *British Farming: 1939-49*. London, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952. viii + 172 pp. 12s. 6d.

The least satisfactory feature of this book is its title. Farming means to most people the job of running a farm, and in a book with such a title one may legitimately expect to find an account of the changes in farming practice during the decade in question, changes which

have certainly been sufficiently far-reaching to deserve a book to themselves. But in fact this is largely a history of the administrative and economic changes which affected the agricultural industry during the war and immediately afterwards and of the response of the industry to those changes in terms of output and structure. As such, it is a highly competent piece of work, as one would expect from an author with Miss Whetham's academic qualifications and practical experience of the inner workings of government departments.

This is no mere colourless record of events. There is no lack of critical assessment of the wisdom, or lack of it, of the momentous decisions taken in those years. One detects here and there perhaps a trace of 'wisdom after the event', particularly as regards the somewhat confused and occasionally contradictory measures of the early months of the war, when it was only to be expected that many people would find themselves out of their depth. But on the whole the author gives full weight to the extraordinary difficulties facing the administrators during the period under review, and the book confirms the favourable impression most people have already formed of the performance of the Departments and the industry during that period.

Looking back twelve years after the event, it is easy to overlook the peculiar difficulties of some of the decisions which had to be made. As a case in point we are reminded of the situation in the spring of 1942 when the departments had to make up their minds as to the year in which agricultural output should be stepped up to its peak. The task, in the author's words, was to "synchronise the year of greatest output from agriculture with the year of greatest stringency in shipping, which depended primarily on the date to be fixed for the invasion of Europe by the Allied armies and the duration of the subsequent and final battles." If the year chosen, 1943, proved to be the wrong one, the industry responded so well to the further call which had to be made upon it in 1944 that total output in that year was not far below the peak.

Although at times, in reading this book, one feels a longing to escape from Whitehall into the fields, nevertheless its great virtue, particularly for those who spent the war years tied to the plough and the cow byre, is the clear and effective way in which it relates the farmers' effort to the war-time strategy of the nation as a whole.

In view of present uncertainties as to future government price policy for agricultural products, many readers will be keenly interested in the discussion, in Chapters VIII and XI, of the finance of increased food production during and after the war, a discussion which presents very fairly the arguments for and against the policy of achieving agricultural expansion through substantial price inducements.

One's only criticism of the book on the score of style is that the author sometimes overdoes the use of the question mark as a means of presenting to us the problems confronting the policy-makers. But perhaps not every one will find this irritating. On the whole the style is lively and lucid.

C. H. BLAGBURN

G. E. and K. R. FUSSELL, *The English Countrywoman*. Andrew Melrose, 1953. 221 pp. 30s.

The sub-title of this book, *A Farmhouse Social History*, does scant justice to its contents, for the authors have gone much further afield for their evidence than the farmhouse or farm cottages. In the belief that country life was "the only life known to most people" the authors have used memoirs of great ladies, tracts, poems, novels, cookery-books, and, indeed, any material they could glean. The evidence is plentiful, for most contemporary writings can be made to throw light on some matters which concern women. The authors have followed the chronological method. Their chapter-headings run: The Elizabethan countrywoman, Cavalier and Puritan countrywomen, In the days of the Restoration, The Georgian country housewife (1712-60), The country housewife under George III, Regency and early Victorian countrywomen,

and The late Victorian countrywomen. Inevitably, therefore, as he progresses through the book the reader is sometimes conscious, if not of repetition, at least of having heard something like that before. Women's tasks are immemorial, childbirth and the upbringing of the family, the provision of food and comfort for the home, the care of the poultry and garden. In particular, the lot of the working farmer's wife changed little from the middle ages down to modern times. The grim necessity of early rising, firelighting, cleaning, cooking, washing up, washing clothes, making clothes and mending them, feeding poultry, and making butter and cheese, were with them from age to age. Their tools were traditional. It was only the nineteenth century that brought to remote small farms an iron cooking-stove with an oven beside the fire and sufficient coal to heat it. In the farmhouse, however, there was a rough abundance of food. "An egg's no use to me for breakfast, I want at least three," said a farmer's daughter to the present writer when they were both children early in the present century. She was voicing the traditional outlook of the English farming family. The women of the farmhouse did not write about their lives. The authors have found more to say of gentlefolk than farmers. Nevertheless the reader of this book is given a picture of the changing countryside, of the habits of the country gentry and the farmers, large and small, with the tragic chorus of the labouring poor. It is to the authors' credit that their account of the farm labourers is entirely objective. The authors have collected much scattered information and illustrated their text by many attractive plates. I hope it is not hypercritical to suggest that one or two of them would have been better omitted. Only contemporary pictures are of value. It is doubtful whether the countrywoman was quite so isolated and travel so difficult in the Tudor times as the writers suggest. It was easy enough to get about on horseback. There is no truth in the story that Elizabeth Elstob, the "Saxon nymph," had to change her name and hide herself in the remote country to avoid im-

prisonment for debt. After her brother's death "she was obliged to depend upon her friends for subsistence, but did not meet with that generosity she might reasonably expect; Bishop Smallridge being the only person from whom she received any relief. After being supported by his friendly hand for a while, she at last could not bear the thoughts of continuing a burthen to one who was not very opulent himself; and . . . she determined to retire to a place unknown, and to try to get her bread by teaching children to read and work; and she settled for that purpose at Evesham in Worcestershire. Here she led at first but an uncomfortable and penurious life; but, growing acquainted afterwards with the gentry of the town, her affairs mended, but still she scarcely had time to eat, much less for study."¹ Appleby is in Westmorland, not Cumberland.

DORIS M. STENTON

CHRISTINA HOLE, *The English Housewife in the Seventeenth Century*. Chatto and Windus, 1953. 248 pp. 21s.

This is an attractive account of the domestic responsibilities and achievements of married women in the seventeenth century, at a time when, as Miss Hole assures us, they were in practice, if not in law, equal partners with their menfolk. We may feel some uncertainty whether this was true of all classes in society, but it was certainly true of those women whose lives are made known to us through contemporary memoirs and diaries.

The book surveys the duties of the housewife from the time that her parents settled on a satisfactory husband for her until she buried him. It describes the marriage ceremony, the tasks involved in furnishing and keeping house, in cooking and nursing, in rearing and educating children—duties, indeed, that are familiar to all ages and classes, though time has changed their content. It also has something to say of the part that women played in managing farms and estates in the absence of

their husbands, and, during the Civil War, of their courage in defending their homes, when necessary, against siege. At the end of it all, one cannot but share Miss Hole's respect for the seventeenth-century housewife, who was expected to be, and was, proficient in so many directions. One suspects that the surviving records reflect the lives of women who had exceptional gifts of character and personality. But at the same time, it is agreeable to read of the successful housewives, who discharged their many duties with efficiency and grace. No one would have called their lives tedious or narrow. Because of the obtrusive presence of death throughout life, women were obliged from youth to face the possibility of earning their own living, even while they equipped themselves for the alternative task of keeping house for the breadwinner. Many women married more than once, and would, presumably, have found themselves destitute had they not done so, but there were also others who finished life as widows competently managing farms or shops. If, as Miss Hole observes, "ignorance and silliness were not then considered marks of womanliness, as they were to be later," it was surely because the world was a harsh place for a widowed woman without good sense and resourcefulness.

Miss Hole condemns the false portrait of the seventeenth-century housewife, which romantic writers have garlanded with rosemary and lavender. But she idealizes the situation of women in another respect by failing to point out that her own account describes the life of the middle class housewife, not the life of the labourer's wife, who worked in the fields, and practised some by-employment at home, as well as managing her house and family. The heroine of this book—necessarily, since the documentary material is limited—is the wife of the yeoman or gentleman, with servants to assist her, and a sizeable household to cater for. The preservation of fruit and jams, the preparation of herbal remedies and tooth powders, were therefore done on a large scale. Indeed, the recipes quoted here, and the illustration of a

¹ J. Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. IV, p. 133.

seventeenth-century kitchen, suggest that her task was more akin to that of the bursar of a small college or school today.

A book which is primarily concerned with matters of fact nevertheless stimulates thought on the changes that have overtaken women's lives in the last two hundred years. Division of labour has narrowed the range of their domestic duties, and the smaller family unit has reduced the demands of the house upon their time. The field of activity has been extended in new directions. But for those who are interested in the old skills of the housewife this is a pleasing account of the spinning and weaving, the cheese and butter making, and the arts now largely forgotten of preparing salves, ointments, dyes, and soaps.

JOAN THIRSK

M. M. POSTAN, *The Famulus: the Estate Labourer in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. Cambridge University Press. 48 pp., paper covered. 7s. 6d.

This is the second in a series of occasional papers issued as supplements to the *Economic History Review*. Its theme is one which until now has been treated only cursorily by historians of the English village community. That hired labour had a place in the organization of the manor is a fact of which most students are aware, but this is the first detailed attempt to trace its evolution and assess its economic importance.

When the curtain goes up, we find that neglected figure, the Anglo-Saxon slave, in possession of the stage. Early codes of Anglo-Saxon law show that even peasants could be slave-owners; the slave must therefore have formed a very numerous element of the population. But by the date of Domesday Book he belonged to a rapidly shrinking class, employed mainly in ploughing. Who took his place when he finally disappeared? Professor Postan draws attention to the tenants recorded on certain Domesday manors under the designation of *bovariū*, smallholders who paid for their holdings by working at the plough for their lords. In twelfth-century surveys this class of tenant, under various names, be-

comes very prominent, no doubt because the Norman conquerors found large tracts of land awaiting development, and the most convenient way of extending the cultivated area was to establish households tied to the service of the demesne. It is tempting to assume without more ado that in this class we have the missing link between the slave labour of the eleventh and the wage labour of the fourteenth century: that, in other words, there is a straightforward sequence from the slave who is housed and fed under his master's roof, to the labourer who is remunerated with a rent-free tenement, and from him to the labourer who draws wages and pays rent. But Professor Postan warns us that this sequence is too simple to be altogether true. He shows that there was never a time when all the staff of the demesne occupied service holdings or were remunerated solely by rent-free tenures. In a particularly interesting discussion of the Monday-men, so called, who appear on many manors, he argues that these tenants must in fact have worked all the week and drawn wages for all but the first day's work, which they performed gratis by way of rent for their holdings.

By an oversight, Devon is omitted from the list of counties (p. 6) in which the recorded number of slaves touched a thousand, nor does Professor Postan allude to the independent evidence for the presence in the county of Huntingdon of slaves whom Domesday Book passes over in silence. The standard of proof-reading is far below that which we have learnt to expect from the Cambridge University Press. *Bubulcus* is misspelt nearly every time it occurs, and other misprints abound, *Chartres*, for *Chartes* (p. 9), *Charactères*, for *Caractères* (p. 14), *mutuari*, for *mutare* (p. 22), *Stafford*, for *Stratford* (p. 34), *Gerard*, for *Guérard* (p. 38) being some of the more conspicuous examples. These, however, are blemishes which can be put right when the paper is reprinted, as it will certainly need to be, for it is an authoritative and permanently valuable addition to the literature of our agrarian history.

H. P. R. FINBERG

MARGARET GELLING, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire*: Parts i & ii based on material collected by Doris Mary Stenton. Volumes XXIII and XXIV of the English Place-Name Society. Cambridge University Press. Vol. XXIII, 1953, liii + 244 pp. 30s. Vol. XXIV, 1954, pp. 245-517 with maps, 30s.

The two latest volumes from the English Place-Name Society follow the high standard of production and presentation which one now expects. The fruits of a painstaking and lengthy task have been prepared by Mrs Gelling in as clear and readable a manner as is possible with such a subject.

The main part of the book covers the county hundred by hundred and parish by parish. The introduction incorporates a section on the geology of Oxfordshire by Dr W. J. Arkell which is supported by a sketch map. There is also, of course, an important section on place-name elements and their distribution.

Although few will read these volumes from cover to cover, for they are primarily works of reference, they will provide information invaluable to the historian and a wealth of enjoyable detail for those interested in the history of their own locality. It is a pity that at three pounds for the two volumes comparatively few private individuals will feel able to purchase them. One small criticism might be made of the layout. In a reference work of this type it is frequently necessary to refer to the index; it would be an advantage therefore if Volume II concluded with the Index of place-names in Oxfordshire rather than with the Index of place-names in other counties.

As in the volumes for Cumberland, published previously, a great deal of space has been given to field-names, which is a subject of particular interest to the agricultural historian. It is unfortunate therefore that in dealing with field-names the work is at its least satisfying. It is not easy to obtain authentic collections of field-names today, for in this era of mechanized farming the Ordnance Survey number has regrettably been found a more convenient means of

identifying a field, O.S. 192 being more methodical than, say, Pit a Bush Quarter. On the other hand the older men in the village frequently remember field-names, and recourse to the deeds of any particular farm will frequently provide them. Many of the field-names in the survey however come from eighteenth- or nineteenth-century sources rather than modern ones, and there has apparently been no dearth of material, for the introduction states that Mrs Gelling and Lady Stenton have recorded only a representative selection of the names available. It is probably true that if too many field-names had been included the impression might have been given of the tail wagging the dog, and it is with the approach more than with the selection that fault may be found.

The authors approach the whole subject in a most scholarly manner, rightly, for too great a recourse to imagination or sentiment could do great harm. Field-names, however, often yield a wealth of agricultural history, and frequently an obvious opportunity for comment is lost by adhering too strictly to the presence of proven elements. To say that the approach is too scholarly would be to contradict the basic purpose of the work, but there are occasions when one feels that Mrs Gelling has been afraid to cast aside the well-proved formulae and to use her imagination and at other times to concede that common sense as well as historical fact can throw light on the origin of a field-name.

"Blenheim Palace," we are told, is "called after the Duke of Marlborough's victory in 1704." Yet among field-names many which might seem less obvious than the origin of Blenheim receive no comment at all; for example, Peat Pit, Flax Acre, Lamb Ground, Scab Hill, Twenty Bushel Piece, and Sainfoin Close. One might suppose that the continual appearance of the name Sainfoin, often comparatively early in the eighteenth century, was in itself worthy of comment.

On other occasions the theoretical explanation is given without mention of the common-sense agricultural. In the case of Picked Stone Field there is good precedent

for explaining that 'Picked' was a common name given to an angular piece of land. There is no mention that recourse to the map has proved this field indeed to be angular, neither is there any hint of the equally plausible suggestion that this might simply be a field from which stones were picked for making-up the roads.

Studying the lists parish by parish, one is driven to the conclusion that we have as yet a very imperfect knowledge of the sources of field-names and that the accepted interpretation of the elements is often applied much too rigidly. 'Dipping' or 'Dip', for example, are said wherever they occur in these two volumes to be probably related to "the dipping of sheep in a liquid preparation to destroy parasites." The rather older idea of washing sheep before shearing is not credited nor indeed is there any indication that the topography has been studied to see whether in fact the surface of the field is simply 'dip'-shaped.

In selecting the names, many such as Far Piece, The Paddocks, and The Pasture, could well have been omitted, and space thus saved to comment on others which occur in such profusion without comment. Snakes Tail Piece, Jack Tar Ground, Brand Iron Piece, Dibdane Furlong, and Lodging Acre might well repay detailed study on the spot. Has Lodging Acre, for example, a reputation locally for bearing grain which 'goes down' before harvest, as the name might imply? Where the names are supplied by local residents or schools rather than taken from enclosure and tithe awards or sale catalogues, as might be expected, the results are much more worth while. For instance, the field-names of Wardington parish which were supplied by Dr T. Loveday are a paragon of their kind; some sort of comment or explanation is provided for forty-five names, and of the thirty-eight or so not commented on at least fourteen might be said to be self-evident.

In the study of all forms of local history so much depends on local practices and conditions that the only satisfactory approach, to borrow a farming metaphor, is a 'dirty-boot'

one. If the field-name section of these surveys is to remain a serious feature of future volumes, it is clear that, tedious though the task may be, there must be much more evidence of contact with the locality and the map. This rather detailed discussion of the field-name section should not, however, be taken as a reflection on the general standard of excellence of the Oxfordshire survey, a work on which Mrs Gelling and Lady Stenton are to be warmly congratulated.

J. W. Y. HIGGS

ANDRÉ J. BOURDE, Ph.D., *The Influence of England on the French Agronomes, 1750-89*. Cambridge Studies in Economic History. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1953. xix, 250 pp. 31s. 6d. net.

The farming of any area is determined by elevation, climate, and soil. Of these factors the first two are unalterable, but soil texture can be modified given adequate machinery, and its fertility changed by mixing or by adding manure. Where soil is capable of growing several different crops what is grown may be what is politically desirable, but the first thing any farmer wants to do is to earn his living. If he knows that he can do this to an accustomed degree by growing a certain range of crops, with implements known to him since boyhood, and methods he learnt at that time, he is not very likely to find novelty attractive. He is much more likely to find it economically risky.

This cautious attitude was encountered by the great improving landlords in England, where new methods are reported to have travelled less than a mile a year in the eighteenth century. In France there was more reason for progress to be even slower. Many peasant holdings were very small, and the peasants poverty-stricken and tax-ridden.

Two events that occurred in the early years of the eighteenth century in England had great influence upon the agronomes of France. The one was the rise of the famous Norfolk four-course husbandry, of which the eponymous hero was the renowned "Turnip Townshend." The other was the horse-hoe-

ing husbandry of Jethro Tull and his invention of new implements to conduct it, the seed drill and the horse hoe. Between 1730 and 1770 the four-course system seems to have been widely adopted in West Norfolk, and following Townshend's example, a good deal of marling to improve the soil texture. It took about the same four decades for Tull's seed-drilling and horse-hoeing to get a serious hearing, and much longer before they became anything like general in this country.

Already by 1750 French admirers of the Norfolk husbandry were writing about it, and advising its adoption in France. They suggested using marl and the sheepfold as new manures, and introducing improved implements. The obstacles were very large and progress was very slow.

One of the most prominent of the French admirers of English methods was Du Hamel du Monceau. He made a great deal of use of Tull's work, and carried out innumerable experiments with it, all of which he described in writings that were translated into English by Mills and Miller. He and Chateaueux are the French improvers best known to English students of farming history, but there were many others, who both wrote about these methods and experimented with them.

Dr Bourde has analysed their interest and measured its effects both in terms of literary discussion and in the field. He has shown how widely dispersed it was, mainly, of course, amongst a section of the nobility and gentry, and how fierce was the controversy aroused.

The protagonists of the new ideas found the social organization and system of land tenure a serious obstacle. The system of fallow grazing rights forbade the sowing of winter crops. The peasants would not hear of using new implements. Many landowners were equally steadfast in their determination to leave things to go on in the traditional way. It was a mental outlook also discovered in England, where it was overpowered to some degree by the necessity for adopting improved systems on newly enclosed farms which, being provided with new buildings and new

fences, were consequently more expensive to rent.

Enclosure was not so readily accomplished in France, with the result that the new 'artificial grasses', clover, rye grass, lucern, and sainfoin, could not be grown, nor could root crops, like the turnip, be introduced into the rotation. These crops would have provided for the sheepfold as practised in England, and this, in turn, would have made the soil more fertile, but the ordinary farmer was afraid of such an innovation.

Despite the difficulties, French interest in English methods encouraged a good many of that nation to visit this country to see the improvements in operation. Such enthusiasts made copious notes and wrote vivid descriptions when they returned home. Some of them tried to introduce on their own estates the methods about which they were so enthusiastic.

The gentry interested were scattered over France, and their influence was therefore widespread, but the practical results do not seem to have been equal to their enthusiasm. This may be true, but Dr Bourde's careful study has shown how closely the innovations in English agriculture were being watched by our neighbours in France comparatively early in their development, well before the fame of Bakewell's livestock had reached Europe, or either Holkham or Woburn sheep-shearings had been started.

Dr Bourde has pointed and described the transfer of ideas from England and France during four significant decades of the eighteenth century. Agricultural ideas had for long been exchanged between the Continent and this country. In these four decades English practice and ideas helped French improvers. English practice and ideas had been influenced by translations of continental books, French amongst them, and by the observations of English travellers abroad for centuries before that time, as indeed all European farming was influenced by the classic textbooks. This exchange of ideas, and of seed and livestock, has not yet been studied in any detail. Dr Bourde has shown the way, and

it now remains for English scholars to examine the advantages our own farmers have derived from the ideas and practice of other countries. Dr Bourde has set a high standard for emulation.

G. E. FUSSELL

FRIEDRICH-KARL RIEMANN, *Ackerbau und Viehhaltung im vorindustriellen Deutschland*, Beiheft zum Jahrbuch der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg, Preussen, III, 1953. Holzner-Verlag, Kitzingen am Main. 211 pp.

This is a well-documented study of German agriculture between 1590 and 1800. Inspired by the research of W. Abel into the influence of population changes on agriculture, Dr Riemann set out to measure the effect of the Thirty Years' War, when the population of Germany was reduced by more than a third, on farm production and specialization. Having traced the slow recovery of agriculture up to 1800, he shows that it was not until the mid-eighteenth century that population and the arable area were restored to the level attained before the war. The book includes a discussion of crops and yields, early improvements in the breeding of stock, the relative importance of sheep, cattle, and pigs, the price relationship of vegetable and animal products, and the wages of agricultural labourers. It emphasizes and fully illustrates

the close integration of crop and stock husbandry throughout these two centuries, even though the balance struck between them differed between one region and the next, and altered in the course of the period.

JOAN THIRSK

GARDNER, H. W., and GARNER, H. V. *The Use of Lime in British Agriculture*. Farmer and Stockbreeder Publications Ltd and E. & F. N. Spon Ltd. 216 pp. 26s.

The value of lime in maintaining soil fertility has long been recognized and the application of it to the land in one of its many forms has been practised since time immemorial. During the years of depression at the end of the last century the practice gradually lapsed and liming therefore played a very important part in restoring the productivity of the land during the second world war.

Messrs Gardner and Garner have produced a very readable book which gives a clear picture of every aspect of the subject. The purposes of liming and its effect upon husbandry are clearly explained. There is also a chapter on the history of liming, which, although necessarily condensed, touches on such important aspects as the opinion of the early writers on chalking and marling, the early chemistry of Davy, and the later work at Rothamsted, Woburn, and Cockle Park.