

Blackfriars

first, and then for those others who, though not necessarily in their second childhood, are yet "children of a larger growth."

B. D.

SOME ERRORS OF H. G. WELLS: A CATHOLIC'S CRITICISM OF THE "OUTLINE OF HISTORY." By Richard Downey, D.D. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd. is net.)

A revised reprint of three articles from the *Month*. Too much good matter in periodical literature never reaches the wider public it deserves and it is quite the right thing to give this criticism the responsibility of book form. Dr. Downey has subjected Mr. Wells' remarkable performance to a very careful examination, and, as we suspected, finds the popular novelist at fault as an historian. In the matter of Mr. Wells' "scientific" pronouncements, in especial, Dr. Downey comes out strong, correcting the somewhat antiquated theories, wild assumptions, and picturesque fancies of the writer of brilliant fiction with the sober statements of accredited men of science. A useful and timely criticism. Mr. Wells enjoys an immense popularity at the present moment, and many of his devoted followers are prepared to swallow any amount of fantastic and ingenious nonsense signed "H.G.W." But that is no reason why common-sense Catholics should refrain from pointing out mistakes.

J. C.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT GUILD BOOK. For the use of the Archconfraternity and Guild of the Blessed Sacrament. With Preface by His Eminence Francis Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd. 2s. net.)

Vol. II. **BLACKFRIARS** June
No. 3. 1921

(With which is incorporated *The Catholic Review*)

CONTENTS

	PAGE
EDITORIAL	131
THE POSITION OF BULGARIA By Leland Buxton	134
THE LAND By Christopher Dawson	137
EARLIEST POLYPHONIC MASSES By Barbara Smythe	146
SPACE, TIME, AND DEITY By Leslie J. Walker, S.J.	170
LEAVES By Vivienne Dayrell	178
ACORNS IN THE WHEAT AGE By George Edgar Biddle	179
THE NUN By Vivienne Dayrell	188
REVIEWS	189

Blackfriars

Bulgaria on account of the existence of armed bands in Macedonia. Of course there are bands in Macedonia, as there always will be until Jugoslavia grants autonomy to that province. You cannot subject a million Bulgarians to the rule of Belgrade without trouble ensuing, but the bands have nothing whatever to do with the Bulgarian Government. As British officials in Sofia are well aware, that Government is doing its utmost to prevent any assistance being given to the insurrectionary movements in the neighbouring States—movements which are the inevitable result of the intolerant rule of those States. But it was always foreseen that the activities of the bands would be used by the Serbians and Greeks as an excuse for further bullying of Bulgaria. Travellers returning from Serbia report that an intensely militarist spirit now prevails there, and that a huge standing army is being maintained. If this army is intended for the annexation of more Bulgarian territory, it will be interesting to learn whether the British Government, having insisted on the disarmament of Bulgaria, has any intention of defending her from her powerful and relentless neighbours.

LELAND BUXTON.

THE LAND

NOWHERE in the world has industrialism achieved such a complete victory as in England. Here alone do we see a Society which exists entirely by and for a cosmopolitan market, and which has lost the last remnants of economic self-sufficiency. And the disturbance of social equilibrium is the more profound because the England of the past was, more perhaps than any other country in Western Europe, an essentially agrarian State. The changes which have made English society and civilization so entirely different in type to anything that exists on the other side of the Channel, in so far as they are not attributable to religion, are mainly due to the peculiar course of English agrarian history.

During the Middle Ages the English countryside, with its open fields cultivated in strips and its wide stretches of common and forest, must have presented very much the same appearance as the neighbouring districts of the Continent, and at the same time England was socially a province of Christendom, sharing in a common civilization, a common art, and common political institutions. The Reformation, however, and the rise of the new landlord class, which had no real parallel in any of the continental countries, launched England on a new path. She remained an agrarian State ; indeed, the landlords gradually stepped into the place of the King as the true rulers of the country—and this at a time when the continental nobility was being shorn of all real power, but the old customary relations of the peasantry to the land that they tilled had been profoundly disturbed. As Professor Tawney has said, the spirit of the new society, with its revolt against authority and its new world outlook, “ is the same as that which on the lips of grasping landlords and stubborn peasants wrangles

rise of English landlords

Blackfriars

over the respective merits of 'several' and 'common,' weighs the profits of pasture in an economic scale against the profits of arable, batters down immemorial custom, and, regarding neither the honour of God nor the welfare of this realm of England, brings the living of many into the hands of one."*

The traditional economy, however, maintained itself partially until after the Revolution of 1688 had assured the supremacy of the great landowners. It was eighteenth-century England, the England of the squires and of John Bull, that created the new agrarian system, and saw the passing of the peasant and the yeoman before capitalist farming and the enclosure of commons. By the time of the Napoleonic wars the peasantry had practically disappeared, and its place had been taken by the two classes that are henceforth characteristic of the English system—the rent-paying farmer and the wage labourer who possesses no stake of his own in the land. At the very time when the English peasant was thus losing his last rights over the land his French contemporary was attaining to full ownership.

Thus the peasantry of England became an agricultural proletariat as entirely lacking in economic dependence as the new industrial proletariat of the great towns.

Yet, in spite of this revolution in the social position of the rural population, England remained to a great extent an agrarian State. Farming was now the business of a class, not the life of the people; but it was an exceedingly profitable business, and remained so even after the repeal of the Corn Laws up to the time when the new wheat lands of America began to fill the English market with their produce. From 1875 onwards the prosperity of British farming declined

*R. H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 408.

The Land

rapidly, and the slump in prices was accompanied by the conversion of plough lands into pasture and the exodus of the population from the villages to the towns. In the 'nineties the process reached its height and England became the country that we know to-day, with its vast urban agglomerations and its half-deserted countryside—that paradoxical land where the population numbers upwards of four hundred to the square mile, but where one passes through leagues of fertile land occupied only by a few scattered farms and cottages.

Yet to the believer in industrialism all seemed well. The country was enormously rich, food was cheap, labour was cheap. England was indeed the workshop and the counting-house of the world. Under these circumstances it was inevitable that the country—a pathetic survival of a vanished order—should become parasitic on the towns, and that its chief function should be to provide recreation for the dividend-owning classes. Landownership, instead of being the natural and fundamental form of property, became an expensive luxury and a pledge of social respectability. The economic value of land was sometimes determined as much by the shooting and fishing that it afforded as by its productiveness. In the Highlands it was possible—and, I suppose, not unprofitable—to displace the crofter in order to make room for the deer.

The war for a moment reversed all this. Agriculture once more became a vital element in the life of the nation, land went back to the plough, and the position of the labourer improved. But the reaction had hardly begun before it was over. Since 1919 the old tendencies have revived in double measure, and at the present moment it seems that the number of men employed and the amount of land cultivated are about to sink to a lower level than they ever reached in the bad years at the end of the last century. If

1688 -
victory
of
great
landlords

Econ.
value
land
changed
radically

Blackfriars

before the war the English countryside was a park rather than a farm, it is now becoming a park that is derelict. The great houses are falling empty, the woods are felled and not replanted; even the fox and the pheasant are finding the cost of living too much for them.

Yet all this does not disturb public opinion. Englishmen for the most part still live in the world of the later nineteenth century, and they do not doubt that when the world has recovered in a few years from the effects of the war, England will once more be the workshop of the world, and our food supply will be as cheap and abundant as it was five-and-twenty years ago. But in reality nineteenth-century industrialism is already a thing of the past: the conditions which made it possible have disappeared or are in the course of disappearing, and they cannot be artificially restored. The society which was believed to be the final economic system towards which all progress moved, was in truth but a passing stage in a transitional order. To none is Progress more merciless than to the man of the age that glories in "progressiveness."

The industrialism of the nineteenth century necessarily involved a threefold division of the world. First, there were the new countries, with their small population and vast areas of fertile land, which could supply the industrial countries with cheap food and raw materials. Secondly, there was the old Oriental world of traditional culture, which lay passive under the economic exploitation of the West, and did not compete with the industrial countries, but offered them a permanent market. Finally, there were the two or three highly industrialized countries which enjoyed almost a monopoly of the new methods, and which were able to build up an economic world power. But this threefold division no longer holds good. The new lands were not slow to develop an industrialism of

The Land

their own, and in the United States this was achieved on such a vast scale that their 100 millions of population have become also self-sufficing. At the other end of the scale the Oriental peoples have begun to do the same. Japan has already become a great industrial power, and China and India are beginning to follow suit.

In the nineteenth century, when the determining factors were the limitation of capital and skilled management and the low cost of labour and raw materials, the tendency was to bring the raw material to the industry and to allow a new population to grow up round it; but under the new conditions, capital and skill are more widely distributed, while the cost of labour, of raw materials, and of freights are constantly increasing, so that it is becoming more profitable to bring the industry to the raw material rather than the reverse. Thus every part of the world will eventually receive the degree of industrial development that is proportionate to the raw material that it produces and to the population that it can support, and the artificial aggregates of population will tend to disappear. The society which cannot feed itself will be at a disadvantage as compared with societies of equally high industrial development which are also self-supporting.

Moreover, as the new countries become more thickly populated, their exportable surplus of food and raw materials becomes less and prices rise, and then there comes the need for more intensive cultivation and for greater productivity, even if that involves a much larger expenditure of labour and capital. Already in the United States we have seen the wasteful extensive farming of rich virgin soils give place to a more scientific and laborious culture, and even waterless lands, which were formerly considered worthless, are being made productive by the new methods of

Blackfriars

"dry farming." In Europe we see the same tendency to make the most of every natural resource, even the most unpromising, and it is this which has brought prosperity to small countries like Holland and Denmark, which possess a truer and wider social prosperity than any of the great industrial powers.

In the long run the country which neglects its natural resources, and stakes everything on industrial production for the international market, will find itself a Vienna among the nations. And no country has gone so far on this path as Great Britain. At the beginning of the century, while the land claimed 59 per cent of the workers in Italy, 48 per cent of those in Denmark, 43 per cent in France, 35 per cent in Germany, and about 21 per cent in Belgium, in England the proportion had already sunk to less than 8½ per cent, and during the last twenty years the decline had steadily continued.

Unless it is possible to reverse this process and to restore some degree of economic equilibrium to our society, the future of England is dark. Not only are there the direct economic dangers that we have described, there are also the social consequences of an unnatural and one-sided development from which we are already suffering. But if once the central problem could be faced, it is possible that our other problems, notably that of unemployment, would assume a much less formidable appearance.

The failure of so many well-intentioned schemes for agrarian reconstruction in the past warn us that the task will not be an easy one. Yet, on the material side, the difficulties are not overpowering. The costliness of even the longest programme of land purchase and land settlement is not overwhelming, as the example of Ireland can show, while from the point of view of national welfare it is no less necessary than expenditure on armaments or tropical dependencies.

The Land

The real obstacle to reform or expansion is social, and lies deep in the character of our civilization. England alone has succeeded in applying to agriculture the capitalist system that was evolved by the industrial revolution. While other countries stopped short at the replacement of the independent craftsman by the factory system, England reorganized the whole of her social life on the new principles and substituted the capitalist farmer for the peasant. But this experiment has not been justified by results. Strange as it may seem, the new system has shown itself less successful than the old in standing the strain of the new conditions.

Nor is it the three class systems—landlord, farmer, labourer—that is alone at fault. As Sir Horace Plunkett has pointed out, there is a rural life problem in every country where the industrial capitalist civilization has been completely triumphant—in the U.S.A. and Australia as well as in England. If farming is looked on simply as a means of making money, if there is no peasant life, no specifically rural civilization, the town will necessarily attract the worker to the detriment of the land.

Thus we cannot solve our problem in England simply by giving the farmer security of tenure and by rendering him independent of the landlord class, as is the tendency of the new Agriculture Act. The farmer class is inclined to diminish rather than to increase, and of late years we have seen the rise of a new type of capitalist farmer, who owns or rents a number of different holdings, and such a system has all the disadvantages of the old three-class organization, while it lacks the more human and social tradition of the landlord class. It stands for money-making pure and unalloyed.

What we need is a class which will live its whole life on the land, a true peasant class which has adapted its ideals and standards of living to the conditions of rural

Land =
Agriculture
1906

life, and which does not aim at the same kind of life as that of the wealthy middle classes of the cities. We have the elements of such a class in our agricultural labourers. They are the true natives of the English countryside, the descendants of the vanished peasantry, and it is to them that we must look in the main as the source of the rural population of the future. It is true that no similar class in Europe has become so deeply separated from the traditions of land ownership. Nevertheless the instinct is there, and we have no reason to believe that the Englishman as such is more incapable than the foreigner of becoming a successful peasant. The failure of isolated smallholders in the midst of a rural society organized for capitalist farming is but natural, and proves nothing against the possibility of an organic change on a larger scale.

The true difficulty is a moral and spiritual one. Present civilization is essentially co-operative, and it does not flourish when it is overshadowed by the competitive civilization of the modern industrial state. Where the peasant class has maintained its economic position in direct tradition from the past it is able to survive, even when, as in modern France, its spirit becomes as individualistic and competitive as that of the urban civilization which controls it. But where, as in England, that historic tradition has been broken it would seem impossible to restore the peasant life without a great renewal of the co-operative spirit. Such a change needs great moral qualities: it is impossible unless there be some binding force outside self-interest. Sir Daniel Hall—assuredly no sentimentalist—has said of Ireland that “co-operation advances not because it can promise a halfpenny a pound or a shilling a quarter more profit, but by its appeal to the spirit; and Ireland, devastated but renescent and always sensitive to the spiritual side of things, is answering to the appeal.” Among the

smallholders of Bedfordshire, on the other hand, he was “most of all impressed by the fierce individualism of these market-gardeners; the larger men despise the smallholders and both look down on the labourers—a rough, drinking lot.”* There was no kind of co-operation or combination. And he goes on to maintain that the fundamental weakness of British agriculture is just this “lack of respect for the things of the mind and the bearing they have on practical life,” which confines the farmer to the narrow routine of customary money-making and renders it impossible to attain the results that have been attained by the farming community in Scandinavia and elsewhere.

Now, that which is true of co-operation in the purely economic sense is yet more true of the deeper spiritual co-operation on which a civilization rests. The peasant civilization of the past was, even more than the civilization of the cities, the creation of centuries of Christian life, and it attained its most characteristic expression in the regions where the religious life was strongest—in Tuscany and in the Tyrol, in the Basque provinces and in Ireland. The civilization which is inspired by greed and self-interest, whatever may be its material achievements, destroys its own roots in the life of the rural classes—it develops the parasitic growths and weakens the vital functions. That was the case in ancient Rome, and it is even more the case with our modern civilization since the Industrial Revolution. The restoration of health to our social organism is perhaps still within our power, but only on condition that the work of material reconstruction is the outward expression of an internal renewal of the whole spirit of our civilization.

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON.

* Hall, *A Pilgrimage of British Farming*, p. 303.

† *Ibid.*, p. 428; cp. pp. 440-3 and 151-2.

Farming part of Christ. culture