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REVIEWS

An Introduction to the Economic History of England: the Middle Ages. By E. LIPSON. (London: A. and C. Black. 1915. Pp. viii + 552. Price 7s. 6d. net.)

THIS is not—like so many “Introductions”—just a piece of book-making, but a work of considerable, even in parts of great, learning. The bibliography is remarkable, and the text shows a mastery, among other things, of pretty well all the very abundant new material—primary and secondary—which has appeared in English during the last fifteen years or so. The handling of primary sources varies in quality, rising highest in Chs. 7–9, which deal with the Gilds and the Woollen Industry. Here the new material gives Mr. Lipson excellent opportunities, which he does not miss. Indeed, so good are some of the detailed discussions that a reviewer is tempted to follow them up before dealing with the broader features of the book, before even asking what its merits are as an Introduction to the Economic History of England.

If an Introduction means a book for beginners, or a book which will arouse interest in one branch of history among those acquainted with other branches, then this volume—although it contains serious contributions to economic history—is not a very successful Introduction. Unfortunately, the earlier chapters, the agrarian chapters, are among the least successful. Not that they are short of learning. There are very few conclusions which one is disposed to challenge; the discussions of received and of new views are thorough and scholarly; but the style is lifeless and the arrangement odd. In the ninth line of the book, before we have had a live account of anything, we are told that “the problem of the manor has given rise to two schools, the Manorial and the Teutonic.” We sigh, think of a coach’s examination notes, and read on steadily through the careful summary of what we had hoped was, at any rate in this form, an extinct controversy. In Ch. 1 it is assumed that we know what a manor is. In Ch. 2 it

is "described in general terms." Agriculture proper first occurs on p. 56: the types of village settlement are introduced, in a way which suggests no real liking for villages or eye for country, among "concluding observations" to an "account of rural life in the thirteenth century" on p. 75. Surely this is all upside down. Seeböhm began with the fields and Maitland with the ordnance map of the villages, and they were not writing for beginners. In the interest of any but the most hardened scholars a protest must be entered against Mr. Lipson's completely unexplained use of that barbarous though convenient transliteration from technical German, "wild field-grass husbandry" (p. 58). But if he is not writing for beginners, some of this criticism falls to the ground.

The argument of the passage just referred to does not seem conclusive. Mr. Lipson "can scarcely suppose that [the English invaders] carried on extensive cultivation in England after their settlement." Where we find examples of such cultivation in later ages "we need not regard them as proof that the English invaders practised the system in this country." Certainly we need not regard them as proof that they practised no other system, but that is a very different matter. Mr. Lipson goes on to discuss the case of Lauder in Berwick, made famous by Sir Henry Maine, where parts of the common were periodically ploughed and then allowed to revert to grass. He quotes with approval a recent expression of opinion that this is merely "a striking instance of the old Scottish system of 'out-field' cultivation," which was based on the same principle, and refuses to see in it "an archaic survival of primitive agrarian practices." But what if the Scottish system itself was an archaic survival, as there seems every reason to suppose? The fact is that the Scottish system—all the variants of which are fully described in the agricultural surveys of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—has been curiously neglected by students of agrarian history. Mr. Lipson, like most other people, takes his account of it from Sir Walter Scott; and a very good popular account it is.

The last of the agrarian chapters—Ch. 4, the Agrarian Revolution—is excellent. All the recent work is judiciously handled. Then come the still better urban chapters. Much the best thing in Ch. 5—The Growth of the Towns—is the study of the ecclesiastical towns and of quarrels between the Church and the Municipality in general. Ch. 6—Fairs and Markets—is full of good material. Mr. Lipson can make his point against no less a mediævalist than Mary Bateson; but I do not think "the opinion . . . that the fairs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries under-

went a change in character, and were given up to purposes of amusement rather than to trade" has really, as he states, "gained currency." The suggestion—in a footnote to p. 236—that it is held by Dr. Cunningham is wrong, and most certainly it has not passed much from hand to hand. In this chapter, by the way, some attempt might have been made to identify the places which Mr. Lipson calls, after Domesday Book, "Aspella in Suffolk" and "Matele in Cornwall." They are introduced with as little explanation as that monster "wild field-grass husbandry," and are as obviously not English. (I am told by Mr. W. J. Corbett that Aspella is Aspell, but that the only trace of Matele is Methleigh Beacon, near Porthleven.)

Among the excellent discussions in Chs. 7-9, discussions in which Mr. Lipson adds appreciably to knowledge, are those dealing with the working of the system of chartered exemption from toll in mediæval towns (p. 256 *seq.*), with the Statute of Westminster and the persistence of borough reprisals against fellow-townsmen of debtors in spite of it (p. 264 *seq.*), with wage and price regulation by Craft Gilds (p. 300 *seq.*), with journeymen's associations in the later Middle Ages (p. 356 *seq.*), and with the evidence for a widespread localised and exporting cloth industry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (p. 391 *seq.*). It is a pity that the chapter on Craft Gilds is burdened with the old comparison of a Craft Gild with a Trade Union, the more so as in his excellent account of the journeymen's associations Mr. Lipson describes things which really did resemble Trade Unions. Two lines in this context would have been ample to dispose of the other superannuated issue.

In fact, one main regret in reading these chapters is that they so infallibly take up each of the well-worn topics. Mr. Lipson is learned, independent, and often conclusive in discussion, but he never starts a fresh hare. This is the more disappointing because his great knowledge of municipal and other records might have illuminated all sorts of matter which, at best, he just touches but does not open out. Such are the question of the urban proletariat outside the gilds, the economic position of women, the rise of capitalism and its progress in other industries than that of wool. If he had thrown overboard a few bales of old controversy he might have found room for more valuable cargo.

The chapter on foreign trade is not among the best, except the part dealing with the merchants of the staple, which is—from the scholar's point of view—quite admirable. For the beginner it is, perhaps, a little too well rammed with fact. As a whole the

chapter suffers, as does the whole book to some extent, from neglect of foreign sources. This would be hypercriticism were the book an ordinary "Introduction," but as its chief merits are not those of an Introduction, but those of a Contribution, the criticism is permissible. Among some five hundred works in the bibliography there is nothing by Sombart or Lamprecht or Meitzen, by Levasseur or Delisle or Fagniez, nothing by Kowalewsky; worst of all, nothing by Des Marez or by Pirenne. It is hard to write well about mediæval towns and trade without Pirenne's *Belgian History*, which is worth—I express an opinion formed before August, 1914—very large masses of German *Gelehrsamkeit*.

Mr. Lipson's last chapter—called Revenue and Exchequer—would have been better omitted. It only has twenty-three pages. Ten of these are filled with a summary of the technical questions relating to the *Dialogus de Scaccario*. Five more go to the, not obviously relevant, question of usury and the effects of its prohibition on society. So there is not much room for what ought to be the main topics of such a chapter, and the book, which had a dull beginning but such valuable middle parts, receives also a dull ending. In connection with this reference to usury it is rather surprising that the financial activities of the Italians are so slightly handled by Mr. Lipson, and that the Jews are not so much as mentioned in his Index.

J. H. CLAPHAM

The North-Eastern Railway: its Rise and Development. By W. W. TOMLINSON. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Andrew Reid and Co.; London: Longmans. 1915. Pp. xvi+820. Price 21s. net.)

MR. TOMLINSON adds to very great local knowledge, both contemporary and antiquarian, wide reading among the Parliamentary Papers which bear on railway history; also he has had access to the North-Eastern Archives. His book is profusely illustrated and provided with diagrams; and though some of the illustrations—such as portraits of chairmen and general managers—are mainly of domestic interest, his reproductions of old prints and plans and his modern photographs of such things as bits of old iron rails, stone block sleepers still *in situ*, or "the oldest railway embankment in the world," are very welcome to the economic historian. The embankment in question was made about the year 1720 for the Tanfield waggonway, and now carries the Tanfield branch of the N.E.R.