

THE COUNTRYMAN

O MORE THAN HAPPY COUNTRYMAN. By H. E. BATES. Illustrated by C. F. TUNNICLIFFE. Country Life. 8s. 6d. Mr. Bates's latest book is a tantalizing affair. At first sight its brevity, its spacious print, and, above all, its charming woodcuts by Mr. Tunnicliffe, suggest one of those productions designed with an eye to anniversary gifts for people of taste, and some of its ten essays—for instance, *Sea Days*, *Sea Flowers*, or the humorous *Mr. Pimpkins*—bear out this impression. But Mr. Bates is not only a conscious artist, and an artist sensible of the root beneath the flower, he is a practical man of country affairs. His experience as chairman of the parish council has familiarized him with other aspects of the country than its appearance. He therefore (almost in spite of himself) is driven to raise certain questions of bounden importance to every citizen in town or country, but alas! he deals with them summarily and dismisses them inconclusively. His last chapter, in which he treats of rural problems, is particularly disappointing, for, in

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people won the vote for which they clamoured, they found it not so great a matter after all.

The lack of a vote is a much greater stigma than the possession of it is a privilege; and though men might rise to defend their rights if anyone threatened to take their votes away, this does not cause them to set great store by the suffrage as long as their claim to it is not challenged.

Mr. Cole is the chairman of the Fabian Society, and his general point of view may fairly be said to represent an up-to-date adaptation of the views of Mr. Sidney Webb and the other founders of that society. More fully than did these pioneers, he recognizes the need for keeping an eye on possible incursions of bureaucracy, for which the policy of gradualness gives scope. Yet he would have us avoid as an unnecessary evil in this country a bloody revolution such as has seemed essential to fundamental reform in many other countries.

describing such now ancient questions as the drift to the towns and the disappearance of the traditional "yokel," it is out of date in its figures and in its general impression of conditions, if one's experience in West Sussex, a district which Mr. Bates is constantly quoting, is a guide. For example, the war-time mechanization of the land raises important issues which are not considered. The rents Mr. Bates mentions are by no means typical of general conditions. It is not clear whether his demand for higher wages for the country worker was written before the £3 minimum or not, nor is it very sensible even to quote a comparison between that and the fabled £10 of the munition worker. Moreover, high wages are not in themselves the attraction of the towns.

Other sociological aspects of the countryside are briefly mentioned by Mr. Bates in the chapters on the New Country and the Old Tradition. Most delightful and satisfying are his essays on Gardens, on which he writes less as a technical expert than as the sort of amateur gardener which we should all like to be, enjoying experiments and perhaps making money even out of his losses by embalming them in print. The most notable chapter is *The Green Hedges*, a eulogy of a geographical feature of which historically Mr. Bates disapproves, and a piece of writing which teachers of geography, we suggest, might use occasionally to capture the living interest of their classes.

Notwithstanding the difficulties of war conditions work continues on the English Place-Name Society's monumental survey. The nineteenth volume, on "*The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*," by P. H. Reaney, which the Cambridge University Press has nearly ready, is dedicated appropriately to the late Professor W. W. Skeat, who, in his pioneer work on the names of the same county, published some forty-two years ago, laid the foundations of modern Place-name study.