

BOOK REVIEWS.

THE MAKING OF MODERN ENGLAND.*

From the Restoration (1660), or certainly from the Revolution (1688), to the early part of the nineteenth century, the governing power in England was practically and effectively in the hands of a few families of large land-holders, who formed the landed aristocracy of the country; in the hands, as R. H. Tawney expresses it, "of that blind, selfish, indomitable aristocracy of county families, which made the British Empire and ruined a considerable proportion of the English nation." The most marked and characteristic political feature of the nineteenth century was, perhaps, the ever-growing revolt of the "middle" and "lower" classes against the political supremacy and dominion of this privileged landocracy, to whose interests the interests of the rest of the community had been totally subordinated and sacrificed. This revolt first became pronounced at the close of the Napoleonic wars (1815). Hence the author of this book seems to us justified in his assumption that for this country, from the social or political standpoint, at least, the year 1815 may be taken as marking the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and in commencing his study of "the making of modern England" at that time.

In his opening chapters Mr. Slater not only admirably pictures the economic and industrial conditions of the rural and urban workers at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but gives an equally admirable summary of the main causes to which these may be attributed. In rapid review he depicts the gradual extension of the privileged position of the Lords of the Manors, and the concurrent and consequent weakening of the social and economic status of the industrial population, as effected by the Statute of Merton (1225) and of Westminster (1285), by the Reformation and the subsequent confiscation of the lands of the Monasteries and Guilds, by the Enclosures of the Tudor period and the Elizabethan Settlement, by the iniquitous Statute of Frauds (1676) and by the wholesale Enclosures of the eighteenth century, during the whole of which the policy of the slow extermination of the peasantry was pursued unchecked. He then describes the first stirrings and gradual development of the spirit of reform, the brave struggle of the industrial classes to emancipate themselves from the more palpable of the legislative fetters forged for their impoverishment and enslavement, the Parliamentary Reform Movement, the Municipal Reform Movement, the Free Trade Movement, the Campaign for Public Health and for Education, Factory Legislation, the rise and development of Trades Unionism and of the new Labour Movement. In short Mr. Slater brings before his reader everything that can be held to have contributed to "the making of modern England," and that for the most part in a calm, moderate, philosophic and impartial spirit that is most attractive and convincing.

This being so, it is a matter of considerable regret that Mr. Slater should entirely lose his philosophic and impartial attitude, whenever he has occasion to refer to the *laissez-faire* Philosophy and Economics. As those who have studied the works of the original founders and exponents of this school of thought know, the fundamental principle of this philosophy is that the primary function of Government is to establish and enforce Social Justice as between all the citizens subject to its influence†; and that it

taught its disciples that this primary function having been accomplished, the safest and wisest policy any Government could adopt would be to leave the citizens free to pursue their own lives and carry on their own industries free from all interference on its part; that then it could, in short, wisely and safely *laissez-faire, laissez-passer*. This philosophy may, of course, be all wrong. But, instead of calmly and impartially summarising it, and then criticising it according to his own inclinations, prejudices and powers, Mr. Slater, we are sorry to say, selects the far easier task of first entirely misrepresenting it, and then with swift and doubtful logic sweepingly attributing all the evil results of incompetent class government and of iniquitous class legislation to its effects.

Thus he informs his readers (p. 65) that: "The doctrine of *laissez-faire* may be expressed as three propositions—(1) The State shall not interfere between employer and employed; (2) It shall not interfere between buyer and seller within the country; (3) It shall place no hindrance in the free development of foreign trade." And he relies on their credulity to endorse his view that this doctrine was being "pretty faithfully observed" during the time when Justices in Quarter Sessions were still empowered to fix wages; when Combination Laws were maintained, "interfering between employer and employed," to the prejudice of the latter; when the old Master and Servant Act, based, as Mr. Slater himself points out, "on the idea that violation of contract by the employer was only a civil case, but by workmen a criminal offence," was still being enforced; and when Corn Laws and Navigation Laws, directly "interfering with the free development of foreign trade," were still unrepealed. Such an attitude, such swift logic and such reasoning may appeal to the students of Ruskin College, of which Mr. Slater is the Principal, but our author would have done well to have improved on them before venturing to address a larger, more impartial and more critical audience.

However, apart from this slip, Mr. Slater's latest book is to be commended to every serious student of history, to all who would acquaint themselves with the causes that have contributed to "the making of Modern England."

L. H. B.

THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH, K.G., ON SOME LAND REFORM PROPOSALS.*

Under the title "The Land" the DAILY MAIL has issued in pamphlet form some reflections on some current Land Reform proposals contributed to its columns by the Duke of Marlborough, in the form of an Open Letter to His Cousin the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P. The Duke seems under the impression that the Liberal Party is concerned only with the introduction of "three main changes into the conditions of rural life." "The first," he tells us, "is the establishment of a minimum wage for the agricultural labourer; the second the creation of Land Courts; and the third the concession to the tenant of greater security against his landlord." And it is to a close examination and destructive criticism of these three

society; for if it be held that the latter can be separated from the former, then it follows that such laws have no other basis than the arbitrary will of the Legislature." The *laissez-faire* philosophers recognised that each individual citizen had certain natural rights, which it was the primary function of the State, or Government, to enforce and protect; but they taught their followers that "their fellow-men, having the same organisation and necessities as themselves, could not have less rights than they had; and that, therefore, they must respect the rights of others so that these should also respect their rights."

* THE LAND. By the Duke of Marlborough, K.G. Publishers, The DAILY MAIL, Carmelite House, London, E.C. Price, One Penny.

* THE MAKING OF MODERN ENGLAND. By Gilbert Slater, M.A., D.Sc., Author of THE ENGLISH PEASANTRY AND THE ENCLOSURE OF COMMON FIELDS. Publishers, Constable & Company, Ltd., London. 1913. Price, 7s. 6d. net.

† They contended that—"Natural justice is the conformity of human actions to natural law"; that—"Natural law should be the basis of social law, of human laws, of