

Dr Yelverton's book is a model of scholarly editing and he has made available a uniquely interesting document. The only lack is the absence of a general index.

J.D.C.

THE ENGLISH VILLAGE. By W. P. Baker. (Oxford: Home University Library; 6s.)

This little book is said to be 'intended for all those—whether they live in town or the country—who wish to understand village life today'. It must be said that, if this be its object, it fails to give any vital knowledge of country life to those who do not themselves live it. The study of the rural village has been attempted many times of late. We have Young's *Portrait of a Village* (1937), *The Changing Village* of F. G. Thomas (1939), *The Village Surveyed* (Arnold, 1949), and several factual works based on that mass-observation which Booth in London and Rowntree in York have made familiar, not to speak of the many contributions in such papers as *The Countryman*, but the present work adds little to our understanding, and the realities of the present situation are given insufficient consideration. The fact is that, with few remote exceptions, the village of today has been so urbanised by modern transport, wireless, newspapers, television and the like, to which must be added the closing of so many village schools, that, apart from the tourist, aesthetic and antiquarian interest, the problems of modern village life are not very distinguishable from those of the smaller market towns. This disappearance of what was once so different a society from the urban one is insufficiently emphasised in Mr Baker's book.

We turn with interest, particularly, to those chapters which are concerned with the undoubted decay of religious observance and belief in rural (as in urban) areas. In Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon there are over two hundred Anglican churches to five Catholic. The author speaks of the 'spectacular' decline in church-going and says that 'many of our country churches are nearly empty Sunday after Sunday' and that it is 'difficult to say whether the decline in the villages is greater or less than in the towns'; thus challenging the assertion often made that the habit of worship has lingered on in rural areas more markedly than in urban areas.

He thinks that 'the lovely buildings' and 'the magic of the bells' gives the Church (of England) 'a better opportunity of recovering its lost influence in rural England than have the Nonconformist Churches'. 'The Roman Catholics', he writes, 'in most parts of England tend to confine their church building to the towns and ask their members in the villages to attend Mass in the nearest town'; he neglects, or has never heard of, our Mass centres and the farms and manor houses so often used in country districts for Mass.

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