



The Women of England. From Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present

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and ill-disciplined to achieve its objective of opening up a new field of social history.

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BARRY SUPPLE

Barbara Kanner (ed.), *The Women of England. From Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present* (London: Mansell, 1980, £12.50), a comprehensive and useful work, contains three kinds of essays. There are those which survey the problems, primary and secondary sources for the study of women in a particular period or century. Sheila Dietrich starts with 'An Introduction to Women in Anglo-Saxon Society', a brief but careful survey of the limited available material. Kathleen Casey continues the account in 'Women in Norman and Plantagenet England'. Here she is forced to draw on work on the sixteenth century by Laslett, Hair and others in the absence of earlier material. The account of medieval society appears conventional but questionable. Rosemary Masek takes us over the 'watershed' in 'Women in an Age of Transition: 1485-1714', which is largely an uncritical list of published material. Barbara Schnorrenberg and Jean Hunter provide an adequate account of 'The Eighteenth-Century Englishwoman'. The nineteenth century is too large for a single survey, so we end with 'Women in Twentieth-Century England' by Neal Ferguson, which is again largely a fairly uncritical catalogue of secondary material. A second type of essay concentrates on a particular source. For the professional historian these are probably more interesting. A slightly bitty, but nevertheless helpful essay by Marc Meyer considers 'Land Charters and the Legal Position of Anglo-Saxon Women'. A suggestive topic is 'Women in the Mirror: Using Novels to Study Victorian Women': Patricia Klaus considers not only women, but the wider use of novels by historians. Finally, Jeffrey Weeks provides 'A Survey of Primary Sources and Archives for the History of Early Twentieth-Century English Women'. The third type is organized primarily by topic. There is the Introduction by Barbara Kanner on 'Old and New Women's History'. There is a discussion of law and legal records by Ruth Kittel in 'Women under the Law in Medieval England: 1066-1485', which rightly warns of the difficulty of using legal records. And there is a very thorough and competent survey of 'Demographic Contributions to the History of Victorian Women' by Sheila Johannson which usefully points out some of the weaknesses of work by Banks, Shorter and others. All the essays have detailed notes and lengthy bibliographies. There can be no doubt that anyone interested in the general field of women and the family would find these essays most helpful for their period. It would not be difficult to criticize the work both for its unspoken assumptions and for its omissions. There is no real attempt to define terms like 'patriarchalism', women's status, women's role, the family and so on. There is no consideration of the ways in which women's role and status may be affected by and in turn affect the political, economic and social system. There is a generally uncritical acceptance of the idea of 'progress' and 'modernization'. The tendency to think in terms of 'watersheds', to assume that everything was changed by the industrial revolution or the 'capitalist revolution' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is strong, and it is more marked as we approach the end of the volume. There is no real sense of the long-term peculiarities in the

position of English women. This is a pity, for if we stand back from the detail, these essays clearly show very well that crude theories that explain women's position in terms of the techniques of production do not work. They also show how there seems to have been a long-term fluctuation in the position of women in which the relative power and status of the sexes is only now reaching a situation which we glimpse a thousand years ago. Yet it would be unfair to end on a critical note. The aims of the book are modest, to provide useful interpretative bibliographical essays. Although I suspect that these are slightly warped by the unexamined foundations, the book is a most helpful contribution. It is reminiscent of Lloyd de Mause's *The History of Childhood*, but is far more scholarly.

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ALAN MACFARLANE

Études historiques hongroises 1980 publiées à l'occasion du XV^e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques (2 vols, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980. \$120 the pair) is the usual quinquennial conspectus of work recently published or in progress in Hungary (cf. *ante*, xcii. 239–40). There are forty-five articles, in unattributed English, French, German, and (in three cases) Russian translations of varying fluency, on all aspects and periods of (mainly) Hungarian history, from legal practices in Roman Dacia to Church-State relations during 1947. Then follow four more general contributions on historiography, and a 200-page research report listing most native Hungarian publications over the whole field since 1945 (this section would have benefited from an index). Earlier chapters include detailed investigation of the political status of Transylvania around 1300 (Gy. Kristó); Papal tax registers as a demographical source (Gy. Gyórfy); the peasants' revolt of 1437 (Gy. Székely); the spice trade, whose importance Zs. P. Pach here underlines, confirming his earlier studies; sixteenth-century mining legislation (O. Paulinyi); and aspects of contemporary practice in the iron mines (G. Heckenast). There are more ambitious analyses of stratification within the estates (by the indefatigable E. Mályusz), and of why and when Hungary's nobility became so comparatively numerous (F. Maksay). The seventeenth century, as usual, comes off poorly, though Zs. Trócsányi contributes a helpful digest of his work on the formation of a Transylvanian bureaucracy; while the eighteenth century benefits from the present fruitful vogue for placing Ferenc Rákóczi's revolt in an international context (K. Benda, A. R. Várkonyi), as well as from new studies in the history of ideas: D. Kosáry describes the educational reforms after 1765, and B. Köpeczi considers aspects of co-operation and friction among nationally-minded *Aufklärer*. Economic history retains its place here, with a valuable survey of the rise of estate-management (I. Kállay), and useful but duller accounts of municipal finances (S. Gyimesi) and the export trade, 1790–1848 (T. Mérei). A. Urbán is interesting on the views of France, England, and America expressed in Kossuth's *Pesti Hirlap*, but for 1848–9 we have only the predictable *chiaroscuro* theses of two old campaigners (E. Andics, Gy. Spira). Equally predictably, there is nothing at all on the 1850s. From the period of Dualism onwards contributions become too numerous for individual mention, but their overall balance reflects changing emphases among Hungary's historians at large, as doctrinaire and economic-bound