

The value of this approach is apparent in its results. Tackett shows that, despite the differences between individuals and parishes, the curés of Gap were generally alike in their origins, education, professional careers and social and economic circumstances. He shows that they were respected and influential men who took their spiritual and increasingly onerous temporal responsibilities seriously; and he also shows that they were generally over-worked, under-paid, over-taxed and frustrated by the aristocracy's monopoly and exploitation of high office in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Here as elsewhere, the great distinction in old France was not that between the legal orders of society, but between aristocracy and democracy. As the abbé Sieyès pertinently put it, those outside the pale were perpetually confronted by an interdict: "Whatever be your services, whatever your talents, you shall go thus far and no farther. It is not fitting for you to be honoured."

Tackett's second purpose, that of broadening understanding of the 'process of politicization' of the parish clergy in the 1780s, involves argument of a different kind. While he shows that the curés of Gap won the right to meet in conference, to deliberate on the '*portion congrue*' and to elect representatives to the tax-boards, his exposition inevitably becomes increasingly concerned with the wider subject of clerical activity in Dauphiné and in the whole of France. Here he unfortunately becomes unduly allusive, assuming that his material is too familiar to warrant the recapitulation his study really requires. Still more unfortunately, the Revolution itself is but briefly surveyed, though much might have been made of the tragic position of the many curés of Gap who apparently retained their confidence in the new order until they encountered the dechristianisation drive of 1793-94. Perhaps, however, the quality of Tackett's work is best indicated by this uncommon complaint, that it ends too soon.

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GEOFFREY CROSSICK, ed. *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914*. London: Croom Helm, 1977. Pp. 213.

The historian interested in the social structure of nineteenth-century Britain is well served for the landed class, and nobody could complain that the working class has been ignored of late. But it is remarkable how little systematic work has been done on what lay in between, for this most "middle-class" century of a very "middle-class" country. The gap is beginning to be filled, however. At the upper end, W. D. Rubenstein's work on probate sources is showing that the really big money was to be made not in industry but in finance and commerce.¹ At the other end, this excellent collection of articles looks at the heterogeneous group composed, on the one hand, of small independent businessmen and shopkeepers, and on the other, of white-collar employees.

While the editor offers the book to begin a discussion, not to end it, one theme comes through very clearly in most of the essays: that the lower middle class was under increasing economic and social pressure from the 1870s on. The

¹ W. D. RUBENSTEIN, "Wealth, Elites and the Class Structure of Modern Britain," *Past & Present*, 76 (Aug. 1977): 99-126; "The Victorian Middle Classes: Wealth, Occupation, and Geography," *Economic History Review*, 2 s. XXX (Nov. 1977): 602-23.

larger scale of business during and after the Great Depression not only stiffened competition for small businessmen, it cut off avenues for upward mobility and independence at work for clerks. Clerks suffered increasing job competition from women and sharp and pushy Germans, not to speak of children of the working class profiting from the Education Act of 1870.

It is not surprising then that the lower middle class developed a strain of conservative defensiveness and an increased fear of the presumed abyss below them (though with less explosive results than in Germany, as Crossick points out in a long introduction full of useful comparisons with the Continent). But the authors do not leave it at that. If they do not attempt to make the lower middle class heroic, neither do they see them as a pack of Mr. Pooters, or of petty-bourgeois reactionaries. The two who come closest to seeing them simply as victims are G.L. Anderson, on clerks², and Richard N. Price, on the connections between lower middle-class frustrations and Jingoism — though Price is careful to note that they were not the only Jingo around.

But there is more than frustration and defensiveness involved. Hugh McLeod's "White Collar Values and the Role of Religion" sees the Chapel as a "protected environment" (p. 72) — one of the few places outside the family where the lower middle class, and especially its children, could be safe from the vulgarity of the masses swarming around them. But he also shows cheerful Methodists rejoicing in chapel fellowship with members of the upper working class, or carrying their nonconformist moralism over into Clarion Club socialism. And he repeats the argument of his recent book³ that the lower middle was the most personally liberated class in the country, subjected neither to their superiors' obligation to set a good example, nor to the proletarian solidarity (or tyranny) of neighbours. R. Q. Gray, also writing about religion (in Edinburgh), is the most schematically Marxist of the contributors. He cavills at the phrase "lower middle class" since the group in question had no direct connection with capitalist relations of production, and prefers "middle strata" (p. 134), but means the same occupational categories as the others do. His intent is to show the cultural innovation of the group, in transforming the non-established churches from forms handed down by the ruling bourgeoisie into institutions which would serve their own needs and express their own interests. His essay, which builds the most imposing body of argument on the smallest body of data (not necessarily a bad thing in an essay of this sort), is concerned basically with hegemony and the way it necessarily involves an independent response from subordinate groups.

With S. Martin Gaskell, writing on lower middle-class housing, the sense of pressure and frustration recedes further; after producing the better housing standards but aesthetic abominations of suburbanization from the 1870s on, the lower middle class comes to the rescue of humane values with the Garden City movement. The credit due the class for this seems, it must be admitted, just a little exaggerated. Finally, Thea Vigne and Alun Howkins draw on their resources of oral history to describe small shopkeepers — their style of life, how they regarded themselves, how they were regarded by others. After looking at industrial Lancashire, they turn to the countryside and compare Mr. Broad, gentlemen's outfitter on the main street of Woodstock, with Charlie Clifton, who sold what were probably not outfits to people who were certainly not gentlemen on a back

² His essay is a précis of his book, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester University Press, 1976). The book treats them more as an occupational than a social stratum, but contains interesting detail on clerical life, particularly in Manchester and Liverpool.

³ Hugh McLEOD, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London, Croom Helm, 1974).

street of Bicester. Their conclusion, after a great deal of fascinating detail, is that shopkeepers were not "a homogeneous group or stratum" (p. 207). And the evidence of the book is that the lower middle classes were not either, useful though it is to examine them in common.

One of the strong points of the book is the manner in which most of the authors look at their group in relation to other groups, higher and lower in society; it is no accident that both Crossick and Gray have written with distinction on the "Labour Aristocracy". What is needed now, to advance the discussion the book hopes to start, seems to be more intensive work on lower middle-class culture, which is what the heterogeneous parts had most in common. And the next item on the agenda for "The Making of the English Middle Class" (a conclusion that we are unlikely ever to reach) would probably be a similar set of essays to ask similar questions about the next group up — here usually called the "established middle class". It is likely to be no more simple a task.

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GWYN HARRIES-JENKINS. — *The Army in Victorian Society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977. Pp. xi, 320.

My review of this book must be a warning, not a recommendation. Mr. Harries-Jenkins starts with the thesis that Sir Redvers Buller's defeats in South Africa in December, 1899, and January, 1900, proved "the Victorian military system" to be "terribly wanting" (p. 2). Of course one agrees that these defeats were bad; equally one agrees that the Boer War revealed in the British army the sort of faults one might expect in any army which had not faced a serious opponent for nearly half a century. But, besides these things, there are the facts that on 8 February 1900, just thirteen days after its defeat under Buller's command at Spion Kop on 26 January, this army started a brilliant counter-offensive under Buller's successor, Lord Roberts; by 15 February it had relieved Kimberley; on 27 February it compelled Cronje to surrender with his whole force at Paardeberg and relieved Ladysmith; and on 13 March, a mere 46 days after Spion Kop, it captured the Orange Free State capital at Bloemfontein.

To most people such a string of victories, which in less than seven weeks transformed the whole war, would suggest that what was "terribly wanting" in the army was not the quality of the troops but Buller's dismal leadership. Mr. Harries-Jenkins, however, will have none of that idea. Ignoring all these facts, he mentions not one of the victories gained by Roberts and actually white-washes Buller's wretched muddles by calling him a man "abused and blamed for the defeats of the British military" (p. 32). No author capable of so selective a use of historical data can be called an objective historian.

Yet one hesitates to accuse Mr. Harries-Jenkins of deliberately misrepresenting the facts because lack of ordinary historical knowledge mars so much of his unfortunate book. Thus, having once laid down his thesis that the British army was "terribly wanting," Mr. Harries-Jenkins seeks to explain it on social grounds, saying that the bulk of British officers came from "the English ruling class" (p. 3). But this inevitably provokes the question of how the army could ever have been so miserably neglected and financially starved throughout Victoria's reign if the class which provided its officers was also the class that ruled the