

REVIEWS

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN CAROLINE ENGLAND. By David Mathew. (Oxford University Press; 10s. 6d.)

Dr Mathew's Ford Lectures for 1945 are concerned with the England of Charles I which faced so incongruously and yet so significantly the France of Richelieu and Louis XIII. The book is divided into eight sections: The Significance of the Period, a Survey of the Material, the Influence of Foreign Policy, the Stratification of the Gentry, the Emergence of a Professional Class, the Laudian and Puritan Influence, the Middle Class, and Casual Labour. It finishes with a section in which certain tentative conclusions about the period as a whole are suggested. The first and the last sections repay a fresh reading when the reader has completed the book as a whole.

Two points deserve to be made. First, there is the delightful and skilfully chosen material in the footnotes; and then there is the leisurely and illuminating commentary of the author. The reader never feels that he is being rushed to a conclusion more clear-cut than the evidence warrants. For this reason the book must be read slowly and any attempt to take the footnotes for granted will be disastrous, for it is these which give weight to the author's thesis that the principal and determining forces in the national life were already turning steadily if unobtrusively towards the Augustan age.

The language of Englishmen was still in its splendour. The words of the quotations shine bright and unworn like coins in a recently discovered treasure trove. Take Anthony à Wood's account of a not unsuccessful adventurer in the field of education, Mr Thomas Farnaby: 'His distresses had made him stoop so low, as to be an abedarian, and several were taught their hornbooks by him. After he had gotten some feathers at Martock (teaching in the grammar school) he took his flight to London, and taught for a long time in Goldsmith's Rents in Cripplegate parish behind Redcross Street, where were large gardens and handsome houses, and great accommodation for young noblemen and other generous youths, who at one time made up the number of three hundred and more'. Or take Prebendary Smart, facing undismayed the first whiff of the Baroque: 'And because you [John Cosin, Treasurer, and Richard Hunt, Dean] thought in your religious wisdoms that it were not beytting the image of poor Christ, above the Bishop's throne, should be all of shyning gold and scarlett, as gay as the 50 glorious angels, by the counsayle of the foresayd popish paynter, you thought good to honour him with a golden beard, and a new blew capp, like a potlid, covering his head with rayes like the sun beames'.

On page 69 the Dolben relationship might be added to the list. Dr David Dolben became bishop of St Asaph in 1631. Of the same

family, but the Pembrokeshire branch, came Dr William Dolben, rector of Stanwick in Northamptonshire. His wife was sister to the famous Archbishop Williams; and their son, Dr John Dolben, became bishop of Rochester in 1666 and Archbishop of York in 1685. Again, on page 70 one wonders whether Laud should not be attached to the fringe of the next group. The ten children of Mr Laud could look round on a reassuring background of bourgeois standing. Their father had held every office in Reading except the mayoralty. Their uncle had risen to be Sir William Webbe and Lord Mayor of London in 1591. Mrs Laud's son by her first husband, John Robinson, was Dr William Robinson, prebendary of Westminster and Archdeacon of Nottingham. The foreground was financially less reassuring, and Laud, it is said, owed his Oxford education to the liberality of a Mrs Burnegham. One wonders whether the description 'worked his way without assistance' might not be reworded. Lastly, in section 6 one might have expected some reference to the influence of Martin Holbeach of Felstead. To those who like to suppose that schoolmasters can influence the course of history his memory is encouraging.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS

THE FREE SOCIETY. By John Middleton Murry. (Andrew Dakers; 12s. 6d.)

This is the sort of book on which it is very difficult to pass a fair and objective judgment. It is patently honest and sincere. In some places it is deeply moving, written by a man who realises the terrible future which faces the western world. There are moments of deep insight and intuition. And yet it is a provocative, tantalising and muddle-headed book in which sentiment has outrun reason, and, one fears, prejudice has outweighed judgment.

Mr Middleton Murry sees the fundamental problem of social life as the securing of right balance between individual freedom and ordered society, between the claims of the one and of the many. He is driven by his argument and, perhaps more, by the stern logic of events, to abandon absolute pacifism, and to accept the fact that such a society must be intolerant at least of intolerance and may consequently be obliged to have recourse to force in order to preserve its freedom. For to Mr Middleton Murry the just society is a society in which the self-affirmation of each is compatible with the self-affirmation of every other member.

This adjustment of claims is of course the great problem of society, and to the individualist or to the contractualist, there is really no solution. He is unable to give to society a greater authority than that of the individuals who compose it; and so at best he has a sort of mathematical criterion by which what is called the General Will is measured by the crude process of counting heads and establishing majorities. Mr Middleton Murry avoids this excess of false demo-