

Students from Scotland and the north of England have a considerable advantage over the southerners, in that a very large number of them have had to work on the land in their early days, and this may perhaps account for the very large percentage of northerners in the research and advisory services. The provision of scholarships, rich enough to attract really able young men of all classes, and the construction of a sort of ladder by which a bright boy can climb from the village school to the greatest of our universities, via such places as farm institutes and agricultural colleges, has helped the supply of men, but there is still much to be done.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered in the agriculture of the past has been that of the exchange of ideas between experienced agriculturists and the dissemination of trustworthy information. It is almost proverbial that the link between the laboratory and the farmer is a very weak one, and it is therefore all the more satisfactory to find that the agricultural advisory service continues to grow both in numbers and in the good graces of the farmers themselves.

The change in this department in the past twenty years is very remarkable. In 1907 there were scarcely any county organisers and only a few lecturers, and they were regarded with the utmost suspicion by the farmers of their districts. A few outstanding characters earned for themselves reputations for wisdom and soundness, but it was done by force of personality rather than learning. To quote a well-known agricultural adviser addressing a meeting of his colleagues recently: "Twenty years ago no self-respecting farmer would be seen speaking to an organiser; while now they seek you out in the market and, what is more, do what you tell them." There has been a great change of heart, and the present generation of farmers is anxious to learn, and is not convinced that the law of the grandfathers is immutable.

The organisation of the framework of the advisory system is almost complete over the country, and the supply of trustworthy information to farmers on almost every subject connected with their business is assured. It remains now for the advisers themselves and the farmers to take full advantage of the inquiring spirit of the age and of the opportunity which is offered. We, especially those of us who are farmers, have been apt to regard our own coasts as the limit of our concern and interest. This parochial view is shaken daily by the closer contacts in the market and in conclave with other parts of the British Empire, and it is

interesting to find that our home advisory service is being depleted of some of its best young men by the creation of attractive posts for them overseas. An Empire Marketing Board, an Imperial Research Conference, a common pool of research workers and advisers—it seems that agricultural science progressive and well organised is about to take its proper place as one of the dominating influences in the development and progress of the Empire.

CLEMENT HEIGHAM.

Our Bookshelf.

Histoire des bois et forêts de Belgique: Des origines à la fin du régime autrichien. Par le Comte Goblet d'Alviella. Tome 1. Pp. xvi + 490 + 18 planches. Tome 2. Pp. xii + 350 + 16 planches. Tome 3. Pp. ii + 140. (Paris: Paul Lechevalier; Bruxelles: Maurice Lamertin, 1927.) 3 vols., 100 francs.

A COMPLETE history of the forests of Belgium from the earliest times up to the end of the eighteenth century is given in these three volumes, which embody the results of much learned research. The economic and social importance of the forests throughout the ages is the main subject of the work, but much light is also thrown on the natural history of the woodlands and on the gradual but late development of scientific silviculture and forest management. Folk-lore, legislation, charters, archives, ancient MSS., classical writings, and modern books have all been laid under contribution. An agreeable feature of the work is the high quality of the full-page illustrations, which reproduce famous landscape pictures, maps, plans, and photographs.

A great variety of information is scattered throughout the work. In every period much destruction of the original forests has taken place. The early natives and their Roman masters regarded the forests as inexhaustible, and ruthlessly plundered them for fuel and timber. Increasing population necessitated more agriculture for its support, and this was only to be obtained by encroachment on the land covered with trees. From the sixth century onwards, the civilising Benedictine monks, in their zeal for farming, were probably more destructive of woodland than the early pagans. The forests that now exist in Belgium and France owe their preservation throughout the Middle Ages to the feudal lords, who loved the chase, and instituted severe game laws, depriving the peasants of their rights to fell timber and pasture their flocks in the forests. The sites of the ruined forests can often be recognised in the modern names of villages and communes. Ypres was so called on account of the elms (*yppen* in Flemish) which were numerous in the woodland where the town was first built. In the years before the War, the country around Ypres was still noted for its numerous fine elms, which were survivors and descendants of the trees in the original virgin forest.