

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN KENT 1480-1660

VII. THE STRUCTURE OF CLASS ASPIRATIONS

WE have suggested that Kent was by the close of our period relatively one of the most urban of the English counties, though this is by no means a startling statement if our estimate that its population may have been as much as 15 per cent. urban is at all accurate. Dominated by no really large city, Kent was remarkable rather for the considerable number of market and manufacturing towns of some consequence which lent stability to its economy, variety to its culture and institutions. It possessed only at Canterbury and at Sandwich (and the latter was declining) merchant groups of any importance in the stricter meaning of that term, most of the men who carried on its extensive wool manufacturing operations being more properly regarded as tradesmen. Yet, as we shall observe, Kent, like all of England, save for the four really great urban complexes of London, Bristol, York, and Norwich, was predominantly rural in its population and institutions.

There was a total of 6,662 identified individual donors to the charitable accumulations of Kent in our period. As we know, these donors gave a total of £251,766 12s., or an average for each benefactor of £37 15s. 10d. This remarkably low average figure is in large part accounted for by the fact that in Kent there was an extraordinary number of benefactions from the poorer classes of the society, which is in turn a most significant testimony to the stability of the culture and to the strength of its traditions. We have been able to establish the class identification of 4,490 of these men and women, or slightly more than two-thirds of the total number. There are 2,172 whose identity in terms of social class cannot be exactly ascertained, though probably far too much time has been spent on the effort. A considerable number of these donors remain persistently in the vexingly anonymous category of "widows", while others are almost certainly spread over the whole of the rural social spectrum that extended from the lower gentry to the agricultural labourers. It may at least be said that the place of death and the nature of the bequest certainly identify 1,684 of these socially anonymous persons as being rural or village dwellers. The social complexion of this large group is particularly puzzling, since both the size of the average charitable bequest and other characteristics suggest a social and economic status somewhat above that of the yeomanry of the county. The remaining 488 donors of unknown social status, including a fair number from London, were urban dwellers. They were clearly, in terms of the size of their average

bequest as well as its nature, of a social rank—again in average terms—somewhat lower than that of the tradesman class.

There were in all, then, 5,058 donors drawn from the several rural classes, the whole of the lower clergy being somewhat arbitrarily included, if we may for this present purpose take into account those donors of unknown status who were certainly rural dwellers. These donors comprise about 76 per cent. of the whole number for the county and represent an unusually high participation of the rural population in the social responsibilities which the age had undertaken. Further, it ought to be remarked that of the 24 per cent. of all donors who were urban, a fair number were in fact Londoners, thus somewhat exaggerating the importance of the urban classes in this crude quantitative assessment.

Excluding from our consideration the one-third (32·60 per cent.) of the donors whose social status is unknown, we find that 50·63 per cent. of the donors were members of the rural social classes and that these men and women gave in all not quite 40 per cent. of the benefactions of the county. Only 16·67 per cent. of all Kentish donors have been precisely identified as belonging to known urban classes, yet these groups gave 41·22 per cent. of the great charitable wealth provided by benefactors during our period.¹

In county after county we have observed that the great burden of social and cultural responsibility was borne by two relatively small social groups, the gentry and their urban counterparts, the merchants and tradesmen. So it was in Kent, but it is pleasant to note that in

¹ Analysis of the social structure of Kentish benefactors :

<i>Number of donors in the class</i>	<i>Social status</i>	<i>Percentage of all county gifts</i>	<i>Percentage of all county donors</i>	<i>Total for class</i>	
				£	s.
6	Crown	2·67	0·09	6,710	7
16	Nobility	6·41	0·24	16,146	16
164	Upper gentry	12·65	2·46	31,860	16
598	Lower gentry	11·19	8·97	28,167	15
1,216	Yeomen	4·13	18·25	10,390	5
704	Husbandmen	0·16	10·57	410	9
324	Agricultural poor (labourers)	0·009	4·86	21	15
23	Upper clergy	11·26	0·34	28,355	16
352	Lower clergy	5·30	5·28	13,338	19
88	Merchants	15·03	1·32	37,840	19
246	Tradesmen	5·24	3·69	13,197	8
140	Burghers	1·67	2·11	4,199	14
548	Artisans	0·65	8·23	1,635	2
65	Professions	7·37	0·98	18,561	8
2,172	Unidentified	16·26	32·60	40,929	3
6,662				£251,766	12

this mature and prosperous county there was possibly the widest participation by all classes in the social responsibilities of the age to be found in any of the counties of England. These two groups numbered not quite a fifth (18·55 per cent.) of all the donors of the county, yet together they contributed nearly 46 per cent. of its charitable resources. Thus the gentry, always a small social class, in fact constituted 11·43 per cent. of all the donors and gave nearly a quarter (23·84 per cent.) of all Kent's philanthropic funds. There were 762 donors drawn from the gentry, the largest number from any social class save the yeomanry. At the same time, the merchant class, including for the moment the tradesmen and those donors identified only as burghers, while comprising but 7·12 per cent. of all donors in the county, bore relatively an even heavier responsibility for the needs of the society, since this very small group gave almost 22 per cent. of the charitable wealth of Kent. Further, it should be observed that a considerable fraction of the 16·26 per cent. of all charitable funds contributed by the donors of uncertain class was beyond any doubt the gift of the rural and the urban aristocracies of the county, with the consequence that we have in fact understated the contributions of these two remarkable social groups which were creating an England to meet their own generous and now well-defined aspirations.

As we have observed in all counties, the assumption of the heavy burdens of social responsibility imposed by the sixteenth century on the English society was by no means evenly or proportionately shared by all classes. The nobility and the older upper gentry tended at once not to be fully in attunement or sympathy with the aspirations of the new age and, quite as importantly, very often found themselves without the liquid resources required for the implementation of the needs of a new and a very secular world. In county after county it was the new aristocracy of commerce and the relatively prosperous lower gentry who assumed leadership, who were most sensitively aware of the needs of the era, and who moved hopefully and aggressively towards securing the fulfilment of their own aspirations for a new England. These classes, and particularly the merchant aristocracy, not only possessed wealth, but it was wealth entailed neither by custom nor by standards of living and conduct which had themselves become an anachronism in the Tudor world. This available, this socially exploitable wealth, which these men were prepared to expend for the institutional purposes to which they were deeply dedicated, gave to these classes over a period of rather more than a century an immense cultural power which permitted them to lay the foundations of modern England.

We may now examine the contributions made by the several classes of men to the building of the social institutions of Kent. It should be noted at the outset that there were sixteen separate royal gifts to

the charitable needs of the county, made by six sovereigns, which totalled £6,710 7s. and constituted 2·67 per cent. of the whole of the charitable funds of Kent. These benefactions were for a considerable variety of uses, though educational needs were most generously favoured, almost two-thirds (65·52 per cent.) of the whole having been given for this purpose.

The nobility, generous as a group and relatively very rich, bore a greater weight of social responsibility in Kent than in possibly any other county in the realm. In all, sixteen members of this class gave the very considerable sum of £16,146 16s. for various charitable causes, or the high average of £1,009 for the group. This amount represents 6·41 per cent. of all charitable funds for the county, somewhat less than that provided by the professional classes, somewhat more than that given by the tradesmen. Moreover, the quality of their philanthropy was most impressive, the amazing proportion of 91 per cent. (91·27 per cent.) of the whole having been given as endowments for poor relief or for almshouses. In most marked contrast to the inclination of the nobility in other counties, very little indeed (4·20 per cent.) of these gifts was for religious purposes and nearly the whole of this inconsiderable total was given for the semi-civic purposes of church building.

The numerous and rich upper gentry of Kent were, after the merchants, the most generous and important of all the social groups in the building of the charitable institutions of the county. There were 164 donors drawn from this class, or 2·46 per cent. of the whole number, who gave the large total of £31,860 16s. for the various charitable uses. On the average, members of this class gave £194 5s. 5d. to the charities of Kent, while the total of their contribution represents the substantial proportion of 12·65 per cent. of the whole, a proportion quite unmatched for this class in the other counties studied save in Buckinghamshire, Yorkshire, and Norfolk. These men were, through the whole course of our period, particularly interested in strengthening the educational facilities of the county, to which they gave slightly more than 40 per cent. of all their benefactions, as compared with 23·14 per cent. provided for this purpose by the county at large. Somewhat more than a third (37·74 per cent.) of all their gifts were for one or another form of poor relief, their substantial endowments of £6,636 5s. given for the establishment of almshouses being particularly notable. They displayed a considerably greater interest in the various schemes for social rehabilitation, to which they gave 7·06 per cent. of all their gifts, than did the county as whole, with an especially strong interest in workhouse endowments and apprenticeship schemes, for which they gave £1,190 and £980 respectively. They were, somewhat surprisingly, persistently secular in their aspirations, no more than

13·53 per cent. of all their benefactions having been made for religious purposes as compared with 26·77 per cent. for the county at large ; and, it may be observed, considerably more than half of all their religious giving was for the church repairs for which these local magnates bore a considerable and not easily avoided community responsibility.

The upper gentry of Kent did not assume a notably significant responsibility for the social institutions of the county until shortly after the accession of Elizabeth. During the long period prior to the Reformation the total of their contributions was not more than £2,478 3s., or only 7·78 per cent. of their ultimate benefactions as a class. But even in this early period the charitable interests of the class were remarkably diverse. About 61 per cent. of all their gifts during this era were for the various religious purposes, with the endowment of masses, to which they gave £676 2s., constituting the largest single outlay. But at the same time they gave approximately a fifth (20·18 per cent.) of all their benefactions to the educational needs of the county and somewhat less than this amount (17·68 per cent.) to the requirements of the poor, principally, it must be said, in the dubious form of funeral doles. The concern of the class with religious uses declined very sharply indeed during the two Reformation decades, when almost a third of all their gifts were for these purposes, with bequests for prayers continuing to be the principal religious pre-occupation of the group. But the great shift in their interest and concern was to the needs of the poor, to which in this short interval they gave rather more than half (51·27 per cent.) of all their charitable funds. It is especially notable that they devoted nearly a third (30·23 per cent.) of all their charities in this period to almshouse endowments.

The upper gentry gained in wealth and in confidence of aspirations during the Elizabethan era, when the total of its charitable dispositions reached the very substantial sum of £5,498 13s., or 17·26 per cent. of the whole of the charitable benefactions to be made by the group. The social concern of the class during these years had become almost wholly secular, though spread over a broad spectrum of philanthropic interest. Large sums were given for the various forms of poor relief, amounting in all to somewhat more than three-fourths (78·55 per cent.) of the whole of their contributions for the period, with especially heavy provisions for the founding of almshouses, to which the generous total of £4,154 12s. was given by seven separate donors of the class. The preoccupation of the class with the needs of the poor was so strong that all other charitable interests were somewhat neglected. It is interesting to note, however, that substantial sums were provided for various schemes of social rehabilitation, these absorbing in all 12·89 per cent. of the charitable endowments of the class for the period.

The requirements of education commanded no more than 5·21 per cent. of all their gifts during the Elizabethan age, while gifts for religious purposes all but disappeared, not more than 3·35 per cent. of the whole having been designated for the several religious needs. The precipitous decline of giving for the uses of the church, falling as it did from 61 per cent. to 33 per cent. to 3 per cent., in the three successive intervals, is an accurate index of the immense cultural and social revolution which had occurred in England in the course of the sixteenth century and documents with some degree of statistical precision the unbelievable shift that had occurred in the aspirations of a particularly powerful and responsible class of men.

Moreover, this great shift in interest was to be permanent in its nature. During the early Stuart period, there was a great outpouring of charitable wealth from the upper gentry, the very large total of £22,076 6s. having been given by members of the class, or well over two-thirds (69·29 per cent.) of the whole of the benefactions of the class during our entire period. But of this great sum, only a tenth (10·43 per cent.) was provided for the now desperate needs of the church and, it must be noted, of this inadequate amount almost two-thirds was designated for the quasi-civic purposes of church repair. There was a slackening, too, in the concern shown in the earlier period for the needs of the poor, not much more than a fourth (28·43 per cent.) having been provided for the various types of endowment for poor relief, though the actual total of £6,276 6s. was still large. The concern of the upper gentry had swung rather to the completion of the educational system of the county, to which eleven members of the class made contributions totalling more than £11,000 and accounting for over one-half (52·91 per cent.) of the total charities of the group during this almost prodigal period of generosity. The outpouring of charitable funds from the class all but ceased with the outbreak of the Civil War, which involved Kent, and this class, to a remarkable degree. During the whole of the revolutionary era the almost inconsequential total of £967 was given to charity by members of this hard-pressed or at best economically uncertain class, and of this pathetically small sum, as measured by the great charitable wealth provided by it during the preceding generation, nearly the whole was given for the relief of the poor and the endowment of one grammar school.

The lower gentry of Kent were relatively numerous, but the class did not as a group compare favourably with the gentry of many other counties in wealth or very possibly in status. For one thing, the class seems to have been extraordinarily fluid in its composition, the absorption of the monastic properties and the constant influx of London wealth being extremely important catalysts operating within it. It also seems evident that many of these gentle families were scarcely

distinguishable from the richer yeomen, if the value of their estates may be taken as a reliable criterion of status. But, none the less, the class was at once large and generous in its assumption of social and cultural responsibility in the county. There were in all 598 donors drawn from this class—more than we have noted in any other county save Yorkshire—constituting the considerable proportion of 8·97 per cent. of all Kentish benefactors. In total, the men and women of this great social class gave the large sum of £28,167 15s. to the philanthropic needs of the county, or 11·19 per cent. of the whole of Kent's charitable endowments. This amount, substantially less than that provided by the upper gentry, was, as we shall note, spread rather evenly over the whole course of our period, betokening at once the continuing prosperity of the class and its sturdy sense of responsibility for the needs of the community. The gentry were doggedly concerned with the problem of poor relief during the whole of our period: a need with which they were in daily contact as magistrates or as the embodiment of the social conscience of their parish, and to which they contributed a much larger total than any other single social group, amounting in all to almost 61 per cent. of the whole of their benefactions, as compared with 40·72 per cent. for the county at large. They gave about a fourth (25·77 per cent.) of all their charitable funds for religious purposes, their early contribution of £2,612 for prayers constituting the largest single amount provided for the several religious uses. It is difficult to understand their relative want of concern for the educational requirements of the county, not more than 8·31 per cent. of all their gifts having been designated for this purpose, while their benefactions for social rehabilitation (1·98 per cent.) and for municipal betterments (3·20 per cent.) were very modest indeed.

During the first of our periods the interests of the lower gentry were solidly committed to the several needs of the church. These needs absorbed the extremely high proportion of 77·2 per cent. of all their benefactions during an interval when the class gave the considerable total of £6,365 2s. to all charitable causes. At the same time, the concern of the class with the needs of the poor was already most evident, this form of charity receiving almost 17 per cent. of all their benefactions during the decades prior to the Reformation. These two great charitable concerns, then, account for the extremely high proportion of 94 per cent. (94·02 per cent.) of the whole of the benefactions of the lower gentry. In the Reformation period proper, an era of most aggressive acquisition of land and wealth by the gentry, the total of their charities declined dramatically to £692 12s., or no more than 2·46 per cent. of the whole of the benefactions of the class, and of this inconsiderable sum, it should be observed, the proportion given to the church fell sharply to 40 per cent. (40·08 per cent.), while

the amount bestowed on the poor rose to well over a third (35·67 per cent.) of the whole.

During the Elizabethan era, the total of the benefactions of the gentry rose to the large sum of £6,696 4s., representing not quite a quarter (23·77 per cent.) of the amount given by the class during the whole of our period. Very dramatic and, as it was to prove, permanent changes occurred during this generation in the basic aspirations of the class. The proportion of funds disposed for poor relief was almost doubled, having risen to 68·76 per cent., while substantial endowments given to grammar schools, totalling £1,316, account principally for more than a fifth (21·32 per cent.) of all charitable sums provided for education. At the same time, the proportion given for religious purposes declined to the incredibly low plane of 5·60 per cent. of the whole of the charitable sums given by the class in these years. In other words, the proportion given by the gentry for religious purposes had dropped steadily and abruptly in successive periods from 77·2 per cent. to 40·08 per cent. and then to 5·60 per cent. There was a very slight increase in the proportion of charitable wealth given to the church in the early Stuart period, when 12·38 per cent. of the whole was so designated, though it must be commented that nearly half of this inconsiderable total was given for Puritan lectureships. In this interval, the generous total of £11,382 6s. was given by the gentry for all charitable purposes, or slightly more than 40 per cent. of the whole provided by the class during our period. The needs of the poor commanded the interest of men and women of this class during these years, when £4,534 8s. was given for direct poor relief and £3,960 for the endowment of almshouses, the remarkably high proportion of 76·59 per cent. of all charitable dispositions in this interval having been made for the attack on indigence. The Civil War did not weigh so disastrously on the fortunes or aspirations of the lower gentry as on the upper gentry, the considerable total of £3,031 11s. having been given for various charitable uses during the two revolutionary decades. The pre-occupation of the class with the state of the poor was even more pronounced during these years, over 80 per cent. (81·26 per cent.) of all benefactions having been made for their relief.

The yeomanry of Kent constituted a large, an honoured, and an extremely generous class of small freeholders. In all, 1,216 benefactors of the county may with certainty be identified as members of this social stratum, comprising 18·25 per cent. of all benefactors and comprising as well by far the largest single group of donors. These men and women gave a total of £10,390 5s. to the charitable needs of the county, or an average of £8 10s. 11d. for each member of the class. This contribution constituted 4·13 per cent. of the whole of the charitable funds of the county, the yeomanry ranking just after the lower

clergy and the tradesmen in their assumption of social responsibility. The yeomen of Kent, taking our whole period in view, were principally concerned with the plight of the poor, to whom over half (52·52 per cent.) of all their benefactions were made, as compared with 40·72 per cent. for the county at large. They likewise gave approximately a third (33·71 per cent.) of their benefactions for the several religious uses, a substantially higher proportion than that of the county as a whole. Since they were a more conservative class than the gentry, the metamorphosis of their aspirations into secularism lagged by approximately a half-generation but was appallingly complete when it was historically accomplished. In the pre-Reformation era about 80 per cent. (78·40 per cent.) of all their gifts were for religious purposes, with particularly heavy bequests for masses, a proportion very sharply reduced during the two decades of ecclesiastical revolution when it fell by rather more than half to 34·82 per cent. The customary bequests of the class for various church purposes did not end until the mid-Elizabethan era, but for that period as a whole only slightly more than 6 per cent. (6·18 per cent.) was provided for church requirements. In the early Stuart interval, however, when most classes of men responded to episcopal persuasion with at least a token increase in gifts for gravely needed religious uses, the proportion provided for such purposes by the yeomanry sank to 1·67 per cent of the whole of their charities, making them in this period, as in the next, by far the most secular class in the county. During these years they gave £2,456 12s. for charitable uses, but the needs of the poor, commanding in all 93·57 per cent. of yeoman benefactions, had come to be the central preoccupation of donors of this class in the period of their greatest generosity.

There was likewise a very large group of charitable donors in Kent drawn from the ranks of that poor, enormous, and somewhat ill-defined class which we describe as husbandmen. In this group there were 704 benefactors, who constituted 10·57 per cent of all donors but who contributed an average of 11s. 8d. for a total of £410 9s. for various charitable uses, or no more than 0·16 per cent. of the total of the charities of the county. These were in the main tiny and customary bequests of a shilling or less, though it should be observed that one, a bequest for an endowment for the poor in 1564, was in the substantial amount of £60. The husbandmen of Kent, like those in other counties, were for a variety of reasons less interested in the welfare of the needy poor, from whom they were most precariously separated, than all other classes comprising the rural society. In all they provided £166 17s. for the needs of the poor, this amounting to only 40·64 per cent. of the whole of their benefactions. They were, at least in Kent, the most conservative of all classes in their devotion to the needs of the church, to which during the entire course of our period they gave almost 57

per cent. of all their charitable gifts, sturdily providing about 19 per cent. for this purpose even during the pervasive secularism which marks the Elizabethan era.

We have likewise recorded charitable bequests from 324 agricultural labourers and rural poor, a huge social class which over a period of centuries left only the slightest evidences of its historical existence. These donors comprised in Kent the remarkably high proportion of 4·86 per cent. of all benefactors, though the pathetic sum of £21 15s. which they left for charity is almost too small to be rendered as a proportion of the whole of the charitable funds of the county. The average contribution of members of the class came to 1s. 4d., the great bulk of their gifts being customary bequests of a few pennies, the average being somewhat distorted by a half-dozen bequests of between £1 and £2 by particularly fortunate members of the class. Almost the whole (99·78 per cent.) of the contributions of the many persons comprising this social group was dedicated either for the relief of the poor (63·22 per cent.) or for the maintenance of the parish church in which their social as well as spiritual life was so completely centred. Small and statistically insignificant as these gifts may be, they none the less betoken a healthy and impressive aspiration on the part of lowly and hopelessly poor men and women to participate at least in some degree in the great age in which they played so inconspicuous a role.

Kent, seat that it was of two sees and several famous monasteries, was more blessed than most counties by the charity of the great clergy. There were in all twenty-three bishops and abbots who left benefactions within the county. The total of the charities of these donors, properly counted as Kentish, was £28,355 16s., or 11·26 per cent. of the whole of the charitable funds of the county. This amount was exceeded only by the philanthropies of the merchants and of the upper gentry, being approximately equal to that of the lower gentry. Of this great sum, however, very nearly half was concentrated in the period prior to the Reformation before the monasteries were expropriated and the great bishops, including even those of Canterbury, sharply chastened in the great wealth which they had once disposed. The upper clergy were particularly interested in the advancement of education, to which they made 62·12 per cent. of all their benefactions. Thus the universities received £8,151 5s., or more than a fourth (28·75 per cent.) of their total gifts, while university scholarships and fellowships account for about a fifth (19·84 per cent.) of the total. As was so frequently the case with these princes of the church, the needs of religion were supported with only a modest proportion (24·97 per cent.) of all their benefactions. Nor did the needs of the poor attract the charity of these highly placed men, since they vested less than a tenth (9·27 per

cent.) of all their charities for poor relief, a proportion far less than that prevailing for any other social group in our period.

The same strictures may by no means be laid against the 352 members of the lower clergy, who were much more sensitively and responsibly attuned to the needs and aspirations of the county. The charities of this important class totalled £13,338 19s., or slightly more than that of the tradesmen, accounting for 5·30 per cent. of the whole of Kent's charitable funds. Moreover, these funds were distributed over a range of charitable interests not greatly dissimilar to that observed in the county at large. In total, members of the lower clergy gave 37·24 per cent. of all their benefactions for one or another form of poor relief, or slightly less than the proportion (40·72 per cent.) for the county. Similarly, not quite 31 per cent. (30·95 per cent.) of their gifts were for the church, or slightly more than was given for this purpose (26·77 per cent.) by the generality of men. Something over a quarter (25·63 per cent.) of their benefactions were made in support of the educational needs of the county, while modest help (4·34 per cent.) was given to the various experiments in social rehabilitation. That members of this group were remarkably and sensitively influenced by the currents of thought of the age is clearly demonstrated by an analysis of the gifts made by the lower clergy for the support of the church itself, for they too seem to have been caught up in the inexorably advancing secularism of the period. In the long interval prior to the Reformation about three-fourths (75·15 per cent.) of all their benefactions were for religious uses, with especially heavy concentration of interest on endowed prayers and church repairs. In the years of the Reformation this proportion was sharply reduced to 44·77 per cent., while in the Elizabethan period somewhat less than a third (32·79 per cent.) was provided for religious purposes. In this latter period, incidentally, the financial status of the lower clergy was precarious indeed, as was their continued participation in the support of the institutions being built by donors of that generation, for the total of the benefactions (£433 8s.) of the clergy during this long era amounted to no more than 3·25 per cent. of the whole sum given by the class in our entire period. But, strangely, it was in the early Stuart period that secularism, or something very like it, overcame the clergy quite as completely as it had the laity. During this generation only 7·55 per cent. of the very substantial sum of £4,955 6s. given by the clergy to various charitable uses was designated for religious uses, the principal preoccupation of these men, like their lay brethren, having now become concentrated on the relief of the poor and the betterment of the educational facilities of the county.

By far the largest contribution made by any single class to the social and cultural institutions of Kent in our period was that provided

by a relatively very small group of merchants. The great total of £37,840 19s., or 15·03 per cent. of the whole of the charitable funds of the county, was given by eighty-eight members of this class, numbering only 1·32 per cent. of all donors. As has been pointed out, very little of this great sum was Kentish wealth, since seventy-five of these men, whose charities in Kent totalled £35,375 11s., were Londoners, though most of them were not only Kentish born but had maintained close personal ties with their native county. But whether their benefactions were derived from London, Canterbury, or Sandwich, they represented endowments with an extraordinary qualitative significance for the county and for the age. They were on the average large benefactions (£430 0s. 3d.); they were almost invariably well and surely vested; and they were applied for purposes which expressed with a kind of prescience the aspirations of a new age and a more complex society. Consequently, as we shall observe, these benefactions were made in a pattern quite different from that of the county as a whole.

Taking our long period in view, we find that these merchants were amazingly secular in their aspirations for England. Thus the relatively very small proportion of 12·68 per cent. of the whole of the charities of these men was given for religious purposes, an amount not much greater than that given for the several experiments in social rehabilitation (10·06 per cent.) in which these aggressive and forward-looking entrepreneurs were most keenly interested. Rather more than 40 per cent. (43·28 per cent.) of their charitable funds were vested in endowments for poor relief or almshouses, while 7·59 per cent. was given for various schemes for municipal improvement. Somewhat more than a fourth (26·40 per cent.) of the contributions by members of this mercantile aristocracy was vested in the advancement of education in the county, of which the large sum of £8,372 10s. was given for grammar-school endowments, an amount unrivalled by the generosity of of any other class in the society.

The decisively important differences in the aspirations of the merchant class are fully evident even in the decades prior to the Reformation. The £9,508 15s. given by the group during these years was large, amounting to a fourth (25·13 per cent.) of the total to be given by the class. Yet even in this early period far more (50·92 per cent.) was provided in endowments for poor relief than for all religious purposes (38·02 per cent.), while substantial sums were designated even for various municipal improvements. The proportion given for religious purposes declined to not much more than a tenth (10·40 per cent.) during the Reformation period proper, little more than was given for municipal uses (6·42 per cent.) and insignificant indeed when compared with the 47 per cent. (47·28 per cent.) of the whole vested in education, or the 36 per cent. (35·72 per cent.) provided for the care of the poor.

In the Elizabethan era this metamorphosis of aspiration was completed. Slightly more than 40 per cent. of all merchant gifts were for endowments in aid of the poor, while about a third (32·54 per cent.) were designated for the strengthening of the educational resources of the county. A remarkably high proportion (17·61 per cent.) of the very large philanthropies undertaken by this class in the period were spread among the various experiments in social rehabilitation, while another considerable fraction (8·58 per cent.) was given for municipal betterments. In all, £9,693 16s. was given for Kentish charities by twenty-three Elizabethan merchants, but of this great sum precisely £103 (or 1·06 per cent.) was for religious purposes. The secular temper of the class stood complete.

Nor was there any substantial change during the early Stuart period, when no more than a tiny proportion (3·18 per cent.) of the great philanthropies provided by the merchants of the period was designated for religious purposes. Once more, approximately a third (32·26 per cent.) of the whole was given for educational needs, rather more than half (53·43 per cent.) for almshouses and the outright relief of the poor, with the remainder spread among many plans for social rehabilitation and municipal betterment. There was no substantial change in the now established pattern of merchant giving during the revolutionary era when, it is interesting to note, the rate of giving by the class was substantially increased, the very large total of £6,129 10s. having been provided for charity in this short interval of two decades. There were, however, most interesting shifts in the structure of interests on the part of the merchants who made charitable bequests during this troubled period. Only slightly more than a fourth of the whole was vested in endowments for the relief of the poor, a sum which, as we have previously observed, seemed nearly sufficient to the age. Considerably more, 30·50 per cent. in all, was placed in a variety of plans for social rehabilitation—for the prevention of poverty—and even more, 36·09 per cent. in the further enlargement of the ambit of opportunity through a greater strengthening of the educational resources of the county. Finally, the small proportion of 6·55 per cent. was provided for religious needs, almost the whole of which was for the augmentation of clerical stipends. In Kent, as elsewhere in England, the merchant class was far out in the vanguard of the age.

Of the donors of Kent, a total of 246 (3·69 per cent. of all donors) may certainly be identified as shopkeepers and tradesmen; they gave a total of £13,197 8s. to its charities, or 5·24 per cent. of the whole. Included in this group, as we have already noted, was a remarkably large number of tradesmen, almost entirely Kentish born, who had made their modest fortunes in London but who remembered their native parishes when in late life the time came to order their affairs and to

implement their aspirations. Their benefactions were on balance substantial, the average of £53 12s. 11d. being considerably higher than that of the lower gentry of the county. The interests of this social group in Kent, as elsewhere, differed markedly from those exhibited by the merchants with whom they must have been in close economic, if not social, contact. Thus the tradesmen gave somewhat more than half (51·06 per cent.) of all their benefactions to the various forms of poor relief, a substantially higher proportion than had been provided by their merchant contemporaries. They were, however, slightly more concerned with projects for social rehabilitation, to which they gave 13·13 per cent. of the total of their charities, having been particularly interested in endowments for workhouses and stocks for the poor, to which they gave a total capital of £886. The tradesmen were only mildly interested in plans for municipal improvement, to which 3·17 per cent. of their funds were dedicated, as compared with the merchants. Somewhat surprisingly, their endowments for educational purposes, comprising no more than 17·59 per cent. of the whole of their benefactions, were not only far less than the proportion afforded by the merchants but were even less than that (23·14 per cent.) prevailing for the county at large. They did, however, share with the merchants an intense secularism, particularly after the Reformation. No more than 15·04 per cent. of all their benefactions were made for religious uses, the largest single ecclesiastical interest, it may be noted, having been the foundation of Puritan lectureships, for which a total of £588 was given.

There was, as well, a relatively small group of urban dwellers (2·11 per cent. of all donors) who can be no more accurately described than as "additional burghers". These men all possessed civic dignities of some kind and were doubtless principally shopkeepers and tradesmen in the sixteen towns from which they were drawn. Members of this group contributed £4,199 14s. to the charities of the county, or 1·67 per cent. of the whole amount amassed in Kent during the course of our period. The structure of the giving of these men differed substantially from that of the tradesmen as a whole but is very nearly identical with that of Kentish tradesmen if the fifty-one Londoners included are withdrawn. On the average, members of the class gave £29 19s. 11d. each for charitable purposes. This group was deeply concerned with the state of the poor, giving somewhat more than half (51·85 per cent.) of all their benefactions for one or another kind of poor relief. Their interest in and support of plans for social rehabilitation (4·26 per cent.) and municipal betterment (2·80 per cent.) were relatively far less generous than the interest of any other urban group and, for that matter, of the county at large. Moreover, the group was almost disinterested in the advancement of education in the county,

only one really substantial gift being made for a grammar school and the proportion given for all educational purposes being only 6·45 per cent. The most significant characteristic of the group was a steady devotion to the religious needs of the various towns of Kent, to which more than a third (34·64 per cent.) of all burgher benefactions were dedicated, with a pronounced secular bias appearing in none save the Elizabethan era, when only 2·32 per cent. of their gifts were disposed for religious uses.

The charitable needs of the county were likewise supported by an extraordinarily large number of artisans and of urban labourers. In all, 548 donors have certainly been identified as belonging to this urban class, amounting to 8·23 per cent. of the donors of the county. These workmen belonged to an almost bewildering variety of trades, fifty-one in all, though rather more than three-quarters of them may be grouped within the trades of clothmaking, building, leather working, fishing, and the preparation or handling of food, in that order. These relatively humble donors gave in total £1,635 2s., which, it may be observed, was something like four times the amount provided by their vastly more numerous rural counterparts, the husbandmen and the agricultural labourers. As we should expect, the artisans were especially interested in the plight of the poor, to whose relief half (49·49 per cent.) of their contributions were made. But they were likewise deeply concerned with the relatively very sophisticated plans for social rehabilitation, to which almost 6 per cent. of their gifts were dedicated, as well as supporting with 5·63 per cent. of their contributions various schemes for municipal improvement. They betray no aspiration for the education of their own children, having given exactly £8 for the support of schools, or less than 1 per cent. (0·49 per cent.) of the whole of the charitable gifts made by the class. The artisans were never so fully caught up in the secular temper of the age as were their richer and more forward-looking urban neighbours, having over the whole period contributed nearly 40 per cent. (38·51 per cent.) of all their benefactions to the various religious needs of their parishes, with, however, one deep descent into secularism when in the amazing Elizabethan era even their generosity towards the needs of their churches was limited to about 5 per cent. of the whole of their benefactions.

There was likewise a considerable group of professional men residing in Kent who made notable contributions to the institutions of the county. The sixty-five members of this class, representing no more than 0·98 per cent. of all donors, contributed a total of £18,561 8s. to the charitable needs of the county, or 7·37 per cent. of the whole of its charitable resources. The average contribution of £285 11s. 2d. was of course high. The size of the average gift explains, to a degree, the care with which it was vested to secure in perpetuity the aspirations

of the donor. Of this group, almost a third, twenty-three, were lawyers ; there were fourteen public officials, most of whom made their wills in or near Greenwich ; twelve were physicians ; five were bailiffs ; three were teachers ; three were historians ; and the remainder were in miscellaneous professional callings. These men gave very little indeed to the experiments in social rehabilitation or to the sometimes grandiose plans for municipal betterment which so interested the merchants and other, and bolder, urban groups of the period. Their greatest concern was with the needs of the poor, to which 43·24 per cent. of all their benefactions were dedicated. In fact, their contribution to the almshouse endowments of the county, £6,093 18s., far exceeded the total provided by this group for any other single charitable purpose and, incidentally, was somewhat larger than the amount given for this purpose even by the merchants. They were most substantial supporters of all the educational needs of the county, to which they gave well over a third (35·15 per cent.) of all their benefactions : £3,360 for the universities, £2,520 for grammar-school endowments, and £615 for scholarship capital. Quite surprisingly, and certainly exceptionally, they were relatively very generous in their gifts for religious purposes, which account for nearly 19 per cent. (18·93 per cent.) of all their benefactions, though it should be remarked that one large religious benefaction made in 1524 quite seriously distorts this proportion.

There remains a very large group of donors, numbering in all 2,172 individuals, whose social status, as we have said, cannot be exactly ascertained. These unidentified men and women account for almost a third (32·60 per cent.) of all the charitable benefactors of our period, while their contribution amounts to 16·26 per cent. of the whole of the charitable resources of the county, or slightly more than that given by the very small merchant class. We have observed that most of these men and women were country dwellers. The size and character of their gifts suggests that those who were rural folk possessed an average status somewhat above that of the yeomen ; somewhat lower than that of the tradesmen for those who were urban dwellers. Since this group is at once large and reasonably representative, it is not unnatural that the structure of its aspirations is similar indeed to that of the county as a whole, save for the fact that its contribution to religious uses is substantially greater and its support of education markedly lower than that for the generality of the men and women of Kent. This large group of donors, unhappily forever clothed in social anonymity, made a most generous contribution, totalling £40,929 3s., to the institutions and the social resources with which this rich and remarkable county was providing itself against the requirements and the challenge of a new age.

All classes of men had, then, made some measure of contribution to the great achievement which had been wrought in Kent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the generality of private men. They had ministered to the needs of mankind with a sensitivity and an instinct of responsibility that betokened a fundamental change in the culture and the institutions of a whole society. It is quite clear that it was the outpouring of merchant wealth which was decisive, for this was a class imbued with a kind of precocity in its understanding of the requirements laid by historical change on the society. But other classes had followed, a little more slowly and a little more cautiously, as the institutions of modern Kent were formed in the course of our period. A kind of miracle was brought to pass by men who were certain in the thrust and temper of their aspirations, who knew what they wished the world inhabited by their children to be, and who possessed the substance, the dedication, and the selfless generosity to bring that world into being.