

Notices of Archaeological Publications.

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF CORFE CASTLE IN THE ISLE OF PURBECK, DORSET. By THOMAS BOND, B.A. London: Edward Stanford. Bournemouth: E. M. & A. Sydenham.

In the volume of the *Journal* for 1865¹ will be found an able paper on Corfe Castle from Mr. Bond's pen, followed by a description of the building by Mr. G. T. Clark. The work before us embodies these two papers, with such emendations and improvements as further researches during the last twenty years have rendered necessary. It may fairly be said, that the author has published probably as complete a monograph of a castle as has yet appeared.

The three principal points noticed by Mr. Bond on which there may be some difference of opinion are (1) the date of the keep, (2) the position of the chapel of St. Mary, and (3) the age and object of the herring-bone work.

The difficulty with regard to the date of the keep has been discussed before. It arises from the apparently contradictory evidence of two such important authorities as the Domesday Survey and the Testa de Nevill. The former states that, "of the manor of Kingston, the king has one hide in which he made the castle of *Wareham*, and for that he gave to St. Mary's of Shaftesbury the church of Gillingham with its appurtenances;" the latter, that the advowson of the church of Gillingham was given in exchange to the Abbot of St. Edward's (Shaftesbury) for the land where the castle of *Corfe* is placed.

If the scribes of the Domesday Survey inadvertently wrote Wareham for Corfe then the discrepancy disappears; or the castle may have been considered as a kind of out-post to the then important town of Wareham—in fact, the castle of Wareham at Corfe—and they therefore gave it the name of the town.

In construction the keep has many features in common with the White Tower of London, which, according to the *Textus Roffensis*, was built by Bishop Gundulf before the close of the Conqueror's reign; and if there is no inconsistent architectural peculiarity about the castle of Corfe, William the Conqueror may justly be claimed as its founder. The incarceration here of Robert, Duke of Normandy, by Henry I, in 1106 speaks of the existence of a castle at Corfe as early as that date.

The chapel of St. Mary is identified by Mr. Bond with the upper chamber of the annexe on the south side of the keep. Both the architectural and documentary evidence point to the identity of it with the chapel; but owing to its inaccessibility, and the difficulty of examining any of its details from below, it is possible there may be some who will hesitate to accept the author's deductions without personal investigation on the spot.

The question of the age and object of the herringbone work is one of

¹ *Arch. Jour.*, xxii, 200.

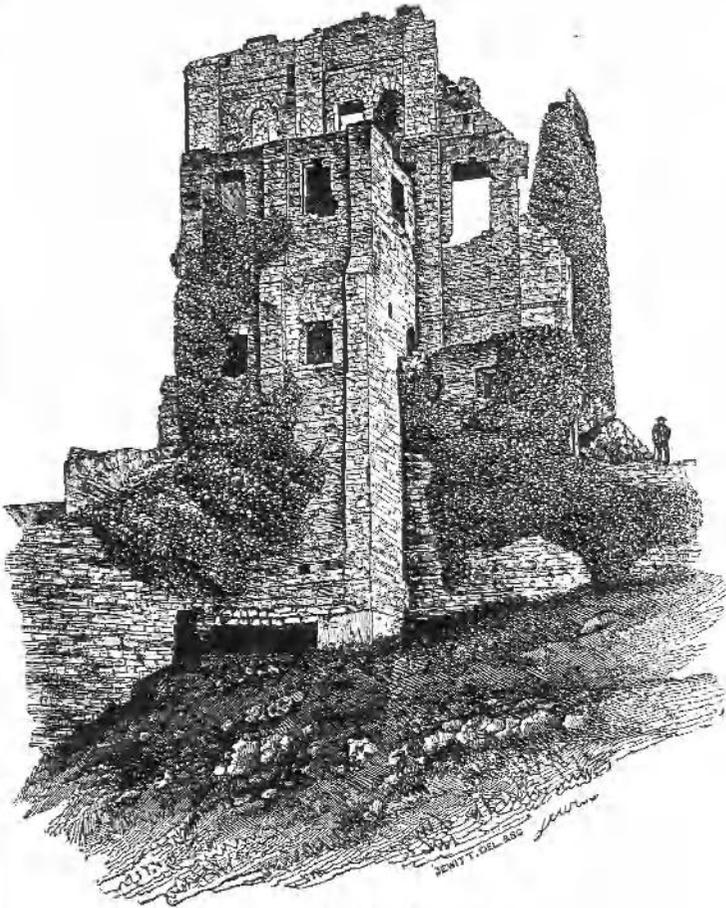
great interest. According to Mr. Bond, the south-west tower of the second ward "is partially built up against the outside of a far more ancient wall, constructed in the peculiar style of masonry known as 'herringbone work.' The stones are flat and thin, and set on edge, inclining diagonally. They are so arranged that the stones of each course incline inversely to those of the courses above and below. . . .

"A curtain wall, about seven feet six inches thick, has been built up outside and against the herringbone wall, and extends westwards from the mural tower last described, till it joins another tower of octagonal shape, crowning the extreme western spur of the castle hill, and which, from its prominent situation, was denominated the 'Butavant' tower. . . .

"The herringbone wall ceases about twenty-six feet ten inches short of the Butavant and is about three feet three inches thick, so that, as far as it extends, the two combined walls measure ten feet eight inches in thickness. The herringbone wall is constructed in similar style in both its faces, and originally measured from end to end about seventy-one feet inside measure. It had three small windows, about equidistant from each other, two of which are still perfect, though one of them has been wholly, and the other partly, built up with masonry. The third is partially destroyed. They are of similar form and size. The opening of the windows was six inches in width and about two feet six inches in height; but they are splayed within to two feet in width and four feet six inches in height. The windows are square-headed, but the splays carry semi-circular arches; the whole being neatly executed in ashlar. The two outer windows of the three are each about equidistant, viz., about eighteen feet, from the respective ends of the building.

"The peculiar character of this wall, and its extremely weatherbeaten appearance indicate great antiquity, and render it worthy of special notice. It evidently could not have originally formed part of the military defences of the castle; and it must therefore be a fragment of some building of either an ecclesiastical or civil character.

"With a view to ascertain, if possible, what was the nature and purpose of the building of which this fragment once formed a part, I have, by permission of the owner, searched for foundations, commencing at the west end of the existing wall, where a section shows that it originally turned at right angles. At four feet below the turf the set-off of the ancient foundation was reached; and following its course, the whole was laid open to its full extent. At the distance of nearly twenty-two feet from the corner where the section is seen, the foundation turns again, and runs parallel to the existing wall to about the same length as the latter, and then turning again at right angles, it met the southern wall near its present termination. The set-off of the foundation at the east end, where there is no superstructure, is about six feet wide; elsewhere it is less, the width of what remains of the wall itself being about three feet six inches. Buttresses about three feet eight inches wide, and projecting about ten and a half inches, terminated the west ends of both the north and south walls; but there is no appearance of there having been any in the lateral walls. The height of the herringbone wall towards the west end is eleven feet above the turf, and four feet four inches below it, making fifteen feet four inches in all. It was no doubt once somewhat higher. The left-hand jamb of a doorway is apparent in the northern foundation at fourteen feet nine inches from the face of the buttress.



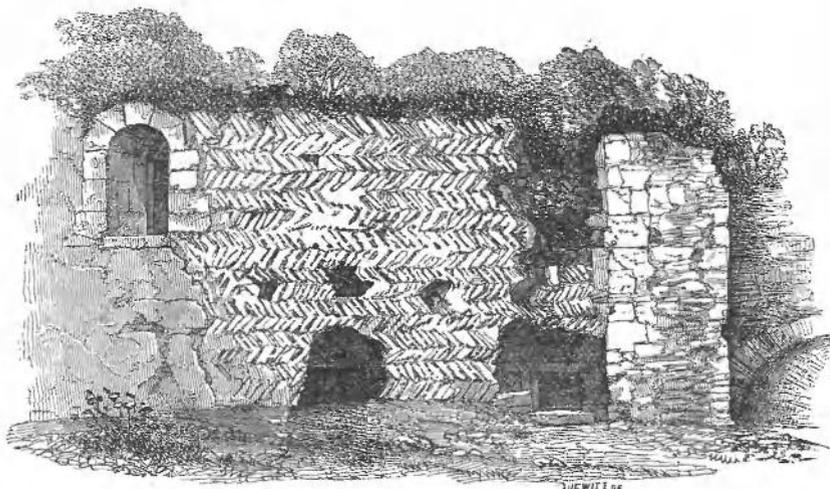
Corfe Castle.
The Keep, or Dungeon Tower, from the south.

Fragments of herringbone work here and there show that the whole building was constructed in the same fashion both inside and out. No indication was met with in the masonry that there were ever any original cross walls, neither are there any original joist holes, which might have shown that the building had contained two or more stories. Additional evidence that there never was an upper story is found in the position of the single row of windows. The sill of the western one seems to have been about ten feet five inches above the set-off of the foundation, but that near the other extremity is about seven feet ten inches above it. At about twenty-seven feet nine inches eastward from the outside of the west wall is a comparatively recent cross wall, three feet three inches thick, which, leaping over a fragment of the herringbone, here six feet high, is carried on northwards some way outside the older work. An excavation to the foundation of this cross wall seems to show that three successive walls have been built at different times on this spot; but as there are straight joints, and no bonds where they meet the older walls, it would appear that neither of them was carried up simultaneously with the original building. On the east side of this cross wall the earth has been raised as much as six feet six inches above the set-off of the foundation, burying the old herringbone work, and rising nearly to the sills of the windows. This cross wall, the lower part of which is rudely constructed, and is manifestly older than the superstructure, seems to have been placed here partly for the purpose of supporting the earth heaped up in forming the eastern platform, and partly, perhaps, to check the advance of the enemy, in case of the outer works of this part of the castle falling into his hands. There are no positive indications of any junction of the exterior walls with any other building; and it would seem, therefore, from the above description, that we have here the remains of a single isolated building, forming one long, narrow apartment of some kind, measuring internally about seventy-one feet by sixteen feet eleven inches.

“One remarkable feature of this building is that the set-off of the foundation slopes upwards about six feet seven inches from west to east, and the floor of the apartment, therefore, no doubt, followed the same inclination. But the slope is not continuous in the same plane throughout, as west of the cross wall it is very slight, whilst at the spot where that wall now stands there seems to have been a sudden rise of about two feet nine inches. Here, therefore, there may possibly have been steps. The windows, in a great measure, corresponded with the slope of the floor, as they rise in the same direction about nine inches, one above the other. No pavement has been met with, but the ground seems to have been covered with mortar, in which a pavement might have been originally laid.

“Near the west end of the existing herringbone wall, at about three feet six inches above the bottom of the foundation, is what looks much like a drain, neatly constructed of ashlar. It does not penetrate beyond the herringbone wall, and runs in a somewhat diagonal direction. It is evidently an insertion of more recent date than the wall itself, but what purpose it was intended to serve is difficult to decide. It is shown in the accompanying wood-cut, which represents the western portion of the herringbone wall as far as the cross wall. The original window on the left of the engraving is partly ruined, but sufficient of it remains to show

that it was identical in form and size with the others, which are perfect. The artist, therefore, has transferred one of the latter to this place in the engraving.



“Some portion of the herringbone work is concealed by plaster, as is shown in the accompanying view.

“For what purpose was this building erected? To what use was it appropriated? The question is one which the evidence hardly warrants our answering with absolute certainty, and we are therefore driven to conjecture. On the whole, however, I am inclined to think it was a church. Could it have been the same which was built by the great St. Aldhelm, then abbot of Malmesbury, but afterwards bishop of Sherborne, in the decade of the seventh century? If such was really the case, this time-worn fragment and this hallowed spot cannot fail to awaken the most lively interest.”—pp. 59-63.

“It seems that this building must have been either a hall or a church, for it is pretty certain from what has been stated in the text that it could not have been a dwelling-house. The sloping floor would render it extremely inconvenient for a hall, even with such scanty furniture as might be found in an Anglo-Saxon residence, and its great length in proportion to the width would be but ill suited for a hall. Moreover, a hall must have formed part of a dwelling-house, whereas this building seems to have been detached and isolated. If an Anglo-Saxon mansion requiring a hall of these dimensions—and such a residence we may fairly assume would be in some degree made capable of defence—had adjoined this ruin, it would have been completely dominated by the hill immediately overhanging it. I think there can be little doubt, therefore, that whenever there was such a mansion at Corfe it was situated on the summit of the castle hill, and not on this spot; and it is not likely to have extended as far as to the platform below, for Anglo-Saxon houses were not very large.

“Before laying open the foundations, I rather expected to meet with traces of a chancel of narrower dimensions than the body of the building,

which would have afforded unequivocal evidence that this was a church. None, however, were found; but such an arrangement was not necessary or always adopted in very early churches, some of which are built of uniform width, after the Roman manner.

"The nave and chancel of Deerhurst church, in Gloucestershire, which have herringbone work, and are supposed to have been erected before the Norman Conquest, are of equal width. They measure together fifty-nine feet in length by twenty feet six inches in breadth, and the chancel was originally still longer. The chancel of Morley St. Botolph, in Norfolk, is only three inches narrower in the inside than the nave, the whole measuring internally eighty-seven feet six inches by eighteen feet three inches.

"The roof of the building at Corfe must have been of timber, as there is no indication of there having been any arches, or any responds from which vaulting might have sprung. None such are mentioned by Bede and other ancient authorities in many churches which they describe.

"The sloping floor of this building seems more indicative of a church than of a hall, for there are many examples of sloping floors in ancient churches in England. The floor of the nave of Badingham church, in Suffolk, is an inclined plane, rising about six feet in sixty, from west to east. The chancel, likewise, originally inclined, but less rapidly. The windows rise with the floor of the nave, as they do at Corfe. There was a church at Badingham when Domesday was compiled, and probably, therefore, it was built before the Conquest. The church now standing was most likely erected on the same spot as the original, and the sloping floor, therefore, may date from the Anglo-Saxon period. The floor of Berkeswell church, in Warwickshire, rises from the west end to the altar about three feet, and consists of several platforms with one or more steps between them. The second and third platforms are inclined planes, rising about one in twenty. The chancel is still more elevated. The floor of the church of St. Mary, at Guildford, in Surrey, is also an inclined plane, and has a very imposing appearance. Part of the church is said to date from before the Conquest.

"These sloping floors of churches are in most cases accounted for by the slope of the ground on which they are built; and at Corfe it is evident that this part of the castle hill originally fell rapidly from east to west, though it has since been artificially formed so as to make two nearly level platforms, one of which is several feet below the other.

"I am inclined to think that where the floor rose rapidly, on the site of the cross wall in the Corfe building, there must have originally been steps, as at Berkeswell.

"The orientation of this building at Corfe is as true as the ground will admit, being in the direction of E.S.E. by W.N.W., so that on the whole the evidence seems strongly to point to its having been a church."—Appendix, pp. 137-9.

The author supposes this to be the church built in Purbeck by St. Aldhelm soon after the year 690, and which William of Malmesbury says was at Corfe. Mr. Bond continues:—

"There is nothing in the architecture of this fragment which is inconsistent with the theory that it is the remains of St. Aldhelm's church. Its very weather-beaten appearance, and peculiar method of construction, evidence its great antiquity; and its very small windows, though of less

dimensions, are not unlike in character those of the 'ecclesiola' at Bradford-on-Avon, which is still standing, and is admitted to have been built by St. Aldhelm, who has been described as 'one of the greatest builders of his time.'

"But there is no similarity between the masonry of the church at Bradford and the wall at Corfe. This, however, is easily accounted for. Masonry in all ages and in all countries has been influenced by local circumstances. Flint was generally used for facing walls in the eastern counties, and brick and wood intermixed were employed in Cheshire; but in Somersetshire and the adjacent part of Wiltshire, where admirable building stone, easily worked, was at hand, ashlar generally prevailed. At Bradford this facility led the builder of the 'ecclesiola' to adopt the later mode of construction, whilst in the remote district of Purbeck, though good building stone abounds, it lies deeply buried in the hills, and is for the most part very hard and difficult to work. It is possible, therefore, that in the seventh and eighth centuries few, if any, quarries might yet have been opened. But stone, thin and flat bedded, requiring no tooling, such as is used in herringbone work, is found near the surface, and is consequently easily acquired. The joints in Anglo-Saxon ashlar work were usually closer than in Norman buildings, and the worked stone of the windows of this building at Corfe is neatly tooled and closely fitted.

"The preservation of the building—possibly in its integrity, but at all events its southern side when the more recent wall was built up against it—may not be without significance as indicating that some superior sanctity or importance was attached to it, arising, it is natural to suppose, from the miracle said to have been wrought there. Its retention could be of little use in strengthening the fortification, for the more recent wall outside it is seven feet six inches thick, and is on the very brink of the castle hill, which is there too precipitous for a besieging force to find footing for attack, and, therefore, no extraordinary strength of wall was required at this spot. That the additional wall was of itself considered sufficiently strong is shown by its thickness not being increased after it quits the herringbone in its course towards the Butavant.

"If, then, St. Aldhelm did build a church at Corfe, and if the very ancient building which has been described was really a church, is it unreasonable to conjecture that it may possibly have been the very same as that of which St. Aldhelm was the founder? The question is one which can never be conclusively answered; but whatever may have been the real date and destination of this building, its great antiquity admits of no doubt; and whether it is the remains of St. Aldhelm's church or not, I think it may be fairly assumed that Queen Elfrida herself either prayed or feasted within its walls."—Appendix, pp. 141-3.

There is one point on which we agree with Mr. Bond most emphatically, and that is, on the evil of permitting the growth of the "baleful plant," as Mr. Freeman rightly terms it, known as ivy. The enormous rate at which this horrid parasite grows is astonishing; and in a few years the noble keep at Corfe will be reduced to a huge ivy bush. Besides the damage inflicted by the plant itself, the increased surface it affords to the wind is often highly dangerous to the stability of lofty pieces of ruin, and it is incredible what beautiful fragments are yearly sacrificed to the ivy god on the plea of its picturesqueness.

The facsimiles of the Kingston Lacey plans which illustrate this volume have already appeared in the *Archaeological Journal*,¹ but the author has added several new and interesting woodcuts, two of which, by his courtesy, we are able to reproduce here.

Mr. Bond's work treats of the history of Corfe Castle, both architectural and documentary, in a most exhaustive way, and it is difficult to see what further can be said about it in its present condition.

The work reflects not only great credit on its author, but also on the local firm of printers who publish it.

¹ Vol. xxii.

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CHURCH PLATE IN THE ARCHDEACONRY OF WORCESTER, being an Inventory and Notice of the Sacred Vessels in use in the Different Churches, with an Explanatory Introduction. By WILLIAM LEA, M.A., Archdeacon of Worcester. Worcester: Deighton & Co.; London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co. 1884.

The Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Society initiated a movement which has widely spread, and attempts are being made to catalogue and describe the Church Plate in the dioceses of York and Lincoln, the counties of Kent and Derby, and in various other divisions, ecclesiastical or civil. One caution we would give to the undertakers in each case, and, from facts coming to our knowledge, we imagine it may be needed. Don't trust to circulars and the answers to circulars; each piece of plate should be seen by some one who thoroughly knows his "Cripps." The Cumberland and Westmorland Society issued no circulars at all, but an expert, armed with "Cripps" and a note book, attacked each parish, while paragraphs in the local papers had previously informed all concerned of the purport of the visit. No one can imagine, until he has had actual experience, how far wide of the truth the answers to the most clear, and most searching circular will go. In the library of the Institute is a volume of replies in return to circulars sent round to the municipal corporations of Great Britain, asking for information as to their municipal insignia. Corporation after corporation reply "Nothing of interest," and in many, nay most of these cases, subsequent enquiries by Mr. Llewellyn Jewett and others, have shown that "Nothing of interest" covered—swords of state, great and small maces, silver oars, seals, and objects of the very highest artistic merit, of great antiquity and historical interest.

The book now before us is free from that fault. It has not been compiled from the replies to a circular. Archdeacon Lea has seen and handled every piece of plate that he describes. The faults we have to find are two. First, he gives too little information about the hall marks; he contents himself with saying the hall mark is of such a year, but does not mention what the marks are; he does not give the maker's marks, nor does he describe the other marks and the shape of their punches. These should have been noted: they are valuable checks against error in reading the date letter: in many cases a worn date letter cannot be interpreted without aid of the other marks. We feel quite certain that, for want of checking the date letter by the other marks, the Archdeacon has misdated the standing cup at Welland; it is clearly one of the class of which the Edmond's Cup at Carpenter's Hall is an example; the picture given by the Archdeacon proves it; this class were in vogue in the early part of the seventeenth century, but the Archdeacon assigns the Welland one to 1721; he has clearly misread a worn letter of the Lombardic alphabet, with external cusps, in use from 1598 to 1618, for one of the capital Roman letter alphabet used, 1716 to 1736; the shields in which these alphabets occur are similar, but the other hall marks should have corrected any error, and a reference to the engraving in Cripps' O. E. P., 2nd ed., p. 228, should have put the matter beyond doubt. If the Archdeacon is right (which we cannot imagine), in dating this cup 1721, it is singular that Mr. Cripps has failed to discover any specimens later than 1646 [Cripps O. E. P., 2nd ed. p. 227.] For want

of attention to the marks other than the date letter, the Archdeacon ignores all plate of a higher standard; thus Hartlebury possesses a most interesting set of plate presented by Bishop Lloyd, the non-juror, and bearing the date letter of 1714; the interest to readers, and to the parishioners of Hartlebury, in this plate would have been enhanced if the Archdeacon had told them it was of the higher standard, nearly pure silver. The omission to mention that the plate is of the higher standard occurs in the cases of Billesley, Stratford-on-Avon, Oxhill, Frankley, S. Andrew Pershore, Berrow, Upton-on-Severn, Great Witley, &c. The Archdeacon gives one or two instances of plate of the years in which the standard was changed, but not giving the other marks, the reader cannot tell whether the plate is of the ordinary or higher standard. The other fault we have to find is that the book would have been enlivened by a few personal notes of the donors of plate; interesting notes might have been given about Duchess Dudley, Bishop Lloyd, and many more. We would also add that the book sadly wants an index.

The Archdeacon sums up the result of his researches in a valuable and interesting preface. The Archdeaconry presents no instances of plate from any of the old provincial mints; one would hardly look for them in Worcestershire; though examples do stray far and wide from their places of origin. The 1571 cups with a fringed stem or gadroon are an interesting class, and probably by some local smith; the ornamentation on the bowl is similar to that on a class found in the diocese of Carlisle, bearing the marks of a rose and E.D., and which Mr. Ferguson, in the last number of the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Society, has traced to a local smith at Carlisle, one Edward Dalton. Any clue to the origin of these Worcester ones should be carefully followed up; their make should be examined, and it should be noted whether they are of hammered work, like the Carlisle ones, and formed by rolling a piece of sheet silver into a conical shape open at both ends and soldering it up the side, and then soldering the small end to a small cup. The book contains an interesting plate of flagons. By the way is not the reason of finding more than one flagon in a parish that each township paid for its own wine, and so a flagon for each township was necessary? we know parishes with three townships, and three flagons, and each township kept its own accounts for wine. A simpler reason, however, is that when a whole parish communicated at once, as at Christmas and Easter, one flagon would not suffice and two were necessary, and in this case no necessity would arise for having the flagons different.

Archdeacon Lea deserves the greatest praise for the pains he is taking to have inventories made of "all the properties, registers, ornaments, and possessions" of a church; we wish all Archdeacons would follow his example, and do more—from time to time comparing with the inventory "the properties, registers, ornaments, and possessions," and set their face against any alienation. One evil is arising out of the attention which has recently been drawn to church plate; a parson or churchwarden discovers that some cup or paten that has laid unheeded in the vestry is of value in the market, as a specimen of some rare provincial mint, or from the *atelier* of Paul Lamerie or Seth Lofthouse, and he immediately proposes to sell it, the proceeds to go to the restoration of the church! This is a painful ending to an antiquary's labours!

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ANCIENT GLASS IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, CREDENHILL, by
Rev. F. T. HAVERGAL, M.A.; together with A DESCRIPTION OF THE
ROMAN CAMPS AND STATIONS IN HEREFORDSHIRE, by H. G.
BULL, M.D. (Hereford: Jakeman and Carver.)

The first portion of this volume not only relates to the ancient stained glass window in Credenhill Church, containing figures of St. Thomas a Becket and St. Thomas de Cantilupe (Bishop of Hereford), but embraces much interesting information as to ancient English stained glass generally, with an inventory of the plate and jewellery belonging to Hereford Cathedral prior to the Reformation.

The second portion of the volume, if we except a plan of the Roman *Bravinium*, and a few items of fresh matter, is little more than a reproduction of a portion of the paper on "Roman Herefordshire," by Mr. W. Thompson Watkin, in the *Archaeological Journal*, vol. xxxiv, pp. 347-382.