

Reviews.

“The Victoria History of the Counties of England.”

Derbyshire, Vol. I.—Edited by William Page, F.S.A.
(Archibald Constable & Co.).

The long-expected first volume of the four devoted to Derbyshire in the important Victoria County History scheme, was issued to subscribers just before Christmas.

The short preface is particularly complimentary to the *Journal* of this Society; it is considered that “it has produced, under the guidance of a series of able editors, many valuable papers touching both the archæology and history of the county.” The editor also expresses his gratitude to Dr. Cox for general help and advice.

It is not possible to do more in this place than to give a summary of the contents of this volume, and to state, with emphasis, that the members of this Society will, one and all, do well to become subscribers to that singularly fine work, stored with the best and latest information on everything that pertains to the history. As the number of copies are strictly limited to actual subscribers, the work is practically certain eventually to rise in price.

Upwards of 160 pages of the opening volume are devoted to the different branches of Natural History, the whole of that section being under the very capable direction of Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, who, in addition to a brief introduction, writes

himself on Orthoptera, Hymenoptera, Sepidoptera, Diptera, Hemiptera, Aphides, Fishes, Birds, and Mammals. The Rev. W. R. Linton deals with Botany; his clearly stated divisions will abundantly satisfy technical botanists as giving an admirable summary of the county's flora; we suppose lack of space prevented any attempt at dealing more popularly with this subject, as has been done in some volumes of the series, notably the recently issued first volume of Berkshire.

The thirty-eight pages of Mr. Arnold-Bemrose on the Geology of the county are peculiarly interesting. The writer of this notice having studied the whole of the opening volumes of twelve counties already issued, has no hesitation in saying that Mr. Bemrose's article is the most generally edifying geological article that has yet been issued in connection with this scheme. The temptation of the geological writer to overload his subject with a plethora of technicalities has been, in this case, carefully eschewed.

More than half, however, of these 450 pages have relation to man. Early Man and Anglo-Saxon Remains receive competent treatment at the hands of one of the best known contributors to this *Journal*—Mr. John Ward, formerly of Derby, and now Curator of the Cardiff Museum. Dr. Haverfield, who is *facile princeps* among Romano-British antiquaries, has a strikingly interesting and profusely illustrated account, covering some seventy-five pages, on the traces that the Romans have left of their long occupation of Derbyshire. This article is a really brilliant piece of archæological scholarship, and every thoughtful Derbyshire man will feel grateful to the writer for having given so much time to the subject.

Mr. J. Romilly Allen is our best general authority on pre-Norman sculptured stones; he contributes a useful critical summary and analysis of the numerous examples of Early Christian Art that have been found in this county.

It will be a great disappointment to not a few to find that Mr. J. H. Round has not been able to find time to contribute the introductory essay to the Derbyshire Domesday, as his essays in other volumes of this series have been universally

admitted to be singularly painstaking and able. Nevertheless, Mr. F. M. Stenton has done well, as his substitute, both in the introduction and in the English text.

The last two articles of this volume are by Rev. Dr. Cox. The one on Ancient Earthworks appears to be a fairly exhaustive and carefully done account of a difficult and most comprehensive subject. A plan is given of every earthwork of any importance, and the general map, marked in red with six different kinds of symbols, will be of great help to students and ordinary readers. The traces of early fortifications, embracing the towns of Castleton and Bolsover, are clearly much more considerable than even the educated tourist has hitherto imagined to be the case. The account and plan of the early camp of great natural strength at Markland Grips, will much surprise many who fancy they know Derbyshire well; it may almost be described as a discovery of Dr. Cox's; at all events it has never hitherto been described.

Dr. Cox's second article is on Forestry, wherein he gives a great deal of the history of the High Peak Forest and of Duffield Frith which has hitherto gone unrecorded. It seems a pity that more space could not have been afforded for this article, for there is clearly much more of original matter available.

The maps and illustrations of this volume are all laudable and helpful, save the frontispiece, which purports to be a view of Matlock Dale, taken from a great height. Mr. Bemrose, in this volume, rightly speaks of Derbyshire as a county that has "a world-wide reputation for beautiful scenery," but this picture is calculated to repel lovers of natural beauty from the shire. A flippant Derbyshire friend, to whom we showed the frontispiece, remarked—"It might be almost anywhere or anything; at first sight it looks like a cabbage garden sketched from a balloon; it has, however, this advantage, it is equally effective whether looked at the right way up, or upside down, or from either side. At any rate it is quite unparalleled; no one has ever before seen either a Derbyshire sketch or Derbyshire scenery the least bit like it!"