

Reviews

Dark-Age Britain: studies presented to E. T. Leeds.* Ed. by D. B. Harden. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. xxii+270 pp., 58 figs., 37 plates. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1956. Price £3 3s. od.

In this book, which, to everyone's great regret, did not appear until after Leeds's death on 17 August, 1955, England's leading archaeologists of the Anglo-Saxon and related periods have cast fresh light on their subject. Much has changed in the forty-five years since Leeds wrote his pioneer work, *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*; but even to-day this work is singularly fresh and when we read *Dark-Age Britain* we gain a strong impression of Leeds's role as a pioneer and of how his sober, cautious interpretations of the archaeological material led him to conclusions which have been corroborated by later finds.

The book starts with a short biographical passage, an appreciation of Leeds's work and a full bibliography of his writings. The main text is then divided into three parts—The Roman and Celtic Survival, The Pagan Saxons and The Christian Saxon and the Viking Age.

One of the main themes dominating the first part of the book is the interpretation of the Celtic and Roman traditions found in the Anglo-Saxon material. Simply stated, the question at issue is whether these traditions are to be interpreted as the result of an indigenous development or as older features adopted from outside. This question is examined from a number of different points of view; by C. H. V. Sutherland in a reassessment of the coin evidence, which fills a long empty gap; by Ian Richmond from the sculptural point of view, taking the Celtic stone heads as his point of departure; and by J. N. L. Myres in a study of Romano-Saxon pottery. Myres, the leading student of Anglo-Saxon pottery, analyses, in a convincing manner, the pottery-groups which show strong Roman traditions or even go back to the pre-Roman fashions of Belgic or earlier times. One asks oneself occasionally if this analysis does not draw overfine distinctions; for example, some of the Romano-Saxon pots are described as copies made in the late provincial potteries of Roman Britain to suit the germanized taste of some elements in the population of the Saxon shore. The fact is that these pots are copied from hand-made Germanic pottery, the design of which is based on first- and second-century *terra sigillata* and silver-ware.

H. N. Savory discusses a group of sub-Romano-British brooches from South Wales and demonstrates that we have here an old tradition of craftsmanship, influenced by Irish imports of sixth-century date. This paper introduces us again to a long-standing problem of some difficulty concerning Irish and British craftsmanship of this period. The problem is considered by Françoise Henry in a study of Irish enamels of the dark ages and their relation to the cloisonné techniques. This outstanding study would show that Irish enamels represent an example of the survival of the Roman *champlevé* and *millefiori* techniques and

* The Editorial Committee is much indebted to Mr. D. M. Wilson, who kindly undertook the task of translating the text of this review from the Swedish.

that they are practically free from the influence of eastern cloisonné enamels, but in close contact, from the seventh century onwards, with the stone and glass inlay traditions. This contact, according to Henry, resulted in borrowings on both sides, from England by Ireland, and *vice versa*.

Henry also tackles once again the problem of the hanging-bowls, this time using the recently-found material from the bogs and crannogs of Ireland. The find-spots and the lack of Christian symbols on these bowls indicate, I believe, that these are secular and not, as they are so often interpreted, liturgical vessels. The problem of their place or places of manufacture has been much complicated by the discovery at Sutton Hoo of the large bowl decorated with exquisite Celtic ornament and millefiori. The fact that Ireland played an important part in the production of millefiori ornament is demonstrated by the finds from Garranes and Lagore, but it is very difficult to assess the connexion of Irish millefiori with Roman millefiori of the continent. The enamelled material which Henry collected denies the theory that the Irish enamels have their origin on the continent. It is possible that we shall ultimately find that the millefiori technique came from the Mediterranean by the same route as the imported pottery treated by C. A. Ralegh Radford in his article 'Imported Pottery found at Tintagel, Cornwall'. This pottery is of great significance in the understanding of the trade connexions of this period and it is surely no accident that it is represented in the west of England and in Ireland, both at Garranes and Lagore, where we know millefiori glass was found.

C. F. C. Hawkes's article 'The Jutes of Kent' reviews the classical problem of this period, one that has long troubled both archaeologists and historians, the migrations of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. First he summarizes the historical sources which are rather thin. The story of Hengist and Horsa, for example, has the feel of a universal folk-story of the wandering of a people. Like his predecessors Hawkes combines the historical statements with the archaeological material. The great difficulty is that the chronology of the fifth and sixth centuries—even that based on continental and Scandinavian finds—is very insecure. Hawkes accepts the dating of Werner, Böhner and Kühn for the continental material and thence for Scandinavia. But this method of building up a chronology on a typological basis is not so secure that it can be transferred to England and used to check the written word. One must keep an open mind with regard to this chronology, not least since the publication of the Danish find from Høstentorp (Voss, *Acta Archaeologica*, XXV (1954) and Norling-Christensen, *Viking*, 1949), with its latest coin from the beginning of the fifth century and with its richness in Roman hack-silver. It is possible, as Hawkes postulates, that the Frankish invasions took place in the period after 525, but we cannot be certain and it is just as likely that Leeds's dating to the period of Clovis (died 511) is the right one. Nor does it seem reasonable to explain the origin of the late-Roman ornament on the square-headed brooches of Leeds type A 1 merely by suggesting that, because this type of brooch does not occur in Scandinavia before the sixth century, the ornament must originate in Kent. Scandinavia or Kent? The question must be left open for the moment.

As a complement to Hawkes's concentrated and controversial article is

T. C. Lethbridge's study of the Anglo-Saxon settlement in eastern England. Here we meet some of the important theoretical problems; for instance, that of the difference in age between the date of manufacture of an object and its deposition in the grave and that of the survival of Roman inhabitants in the Anglo-Saxon period. This article of Lethbridge's is a bit confusing but it does give a picture of the difficulties of combining archaeological and historical evidence.

Of great value is the complete survey of the glass finds of this period by D. B. Harden in his study 'Glass Vessels in Britain and Ireland, A.D. 400-1000'. This is a concise exhaustive exposition which puts into a strict and concentrated form the evidence based on Harden's many earlier papers in which varying problems have been handled in detail. Not the least significant is the discussion and description of the scarce finds from settlement-sites of a later part of the dark ages (700-1000), when grave material is lacking. This lack has resulted in the scarcity of finds of this exceptionally-fine period of glass-making in western Europe. We await with interest the Hamwiß material, which Harden merely mentions in anticipation of its definitive publication.

One of the larger studies in the book and one which presents new material is R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford's 'Late Saxon Disc-Brooches'. It is, first and foremost, a justification of the Fuller brooch in the British Museum. This brooch was rejected long ago by Hercules Read and others, when on loan in the Ashmolean Museum and was alienated from that collection, despite E. T. Leeds's own firm belief even at that time in its genuineness. It can be clearly understood how this remarkably rich silver and niello brooch, preserved in such a condition that it might have been made yesterday and with its strange unparalleled iconography, was taken as a forgery.

Recent examination in the British Museum has proved its genuineness and Bruce-Mitford discusses it, along with about ten other brooches which form a heterogeneous group spanning the period from the eighth to the eleventh century. The ornament of these brooches represents nearly all the art styles of the period. Bruce-Mitford relates the Fuller brooch to the well-known group of decorated material which includes the Trewhiddle silver objects, the Abingdon sword, the Bologna finger-ring and the manuscripts of the 'Canterbury School' (B.M. Royal I E VI, the Stockholm Codex Aureus, the Cambridge University Library Book of Cerne, etc.). There can be no doubt that these comparisons are correct; however, although one can define the details and parallel them elsewhere, the brooch as a whole presents us with an unique, almost foreign, impression.

This impression is not only dependent on the fact that the five senses are depicted here as personifications, a concept so completely unparalleled that it is not met with again until several centuries later. The roundels round the edge of the brooch are also strange with their head-and-shoulder portraits, with their stiff clear-cut geometric ornament and their animals which are much less stylized than those normally occurring in this style. On this brooch pictorial art replaces mere ornament. There are distinct differences, for example, between the ornament of the Fuller brooch and the Bologna finger-ring. The figures of the finger-ring are purely ornamental; the ornament on the Fuller brooch is an inherent part of a complete

iconographic compilation. Bruce-Mitford has produced a fine iconographic study but has not been able to go any further in his interpretation than the five senses and the four factors of human, animal, bird and plant life. We must accept the fact that the roundels of the border of the brooch have a definite meaning in relation to the five senses even if we cannot interpret them. I find it hard to believe that the Fuller brooch is a secular object, since the five senses occur prominently in the Homilies.

The brooch from Hillesøy, Norway, is out of series in this group of disc-brooches. It is of bronze decorated with four trees of life in combination with four winged dragons; round the edge is an interlaced border divided into four fields, a detail which may perhaps indicate Irish influence. It is hard to say where this brooch was made. It could be Anglo-Saxon, as Bruce-Mitford argues, or it could be Scottish. Whatever its origin it has a completely different firmness and clarity in composition from those of the Witham pins and the Brunswick casket, with which it is compared; not only the composition but also the animal ornament is rather different. The brooch does not belong to any distinct group, and like so many objects in this period, it has a character of its own.

Interest in the excavation of towns and especially in the examination of town buildings has grown in recent years. Both in England and on the continent there have been great advances in this field. G. C. Dunning, mainly by means of the pottery found on different sites, has thrown new light on the relationship between England and the continent in the late-Saxon period. The great export of Rhenish pottery from the eighth century onwards has received a lot of attention, chiefly from German scholars. Of particular interest is a glazed pottery of ninth- and tenth-century date found during recent years in Holland and England. The study of these trade connexions is complicated by the fact that this glazed pottery was manufactured in both countries. Dunning's article shows how much archaeology has progressed in this study: yet how much further must it go! What about Quentovic, for example, and what do we know of the archaeology of the oldest towns in northern France?

At the end of the book Sir Cyril Fox writes on the Monastery of St. Mary and St. Peter at Exeter and E. M. Jope on Saxon Oxford and its region, two excellent papers on narrowly defined problems with wide implications.

Dark-Age Britain is a particularly valuable contribution to the not over-rich literature on this period. In the many new aspects of the subject dealt with here we can see how much the study of the dark ages has progressed since Leeds began his career as an archaeologist and we can also see how great was Leeds's own contribution to the many different problems. It is a work which should stimulate a growing study.

HOLGER ARBMAN.

Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland. By J. R. C. Hamilton. 11 × 8½ in. xiv + 228 pp., 91 figs, 40 plates, and loose plan in pocket. Ministry of Works Archaeological Reports, no. 1. Edinburgh: H. M. Stationery Office, 1956. Price £3 3s. od.

Until recent years the record of the Ministry of Works as guardians of our rich inheritance of ancient sites in the Northern Isles has not been entirely a happy

one. Many monuments, it is true, have been fully uncovered and restored, for the edification of the casual visitor. But in the process the scholar has all too frequently been ill served, through an excessive concentration on purely architectural features and a lamentable disregard of stratigraphy and the principles of recording. Too often has the archaeological baby been thrown out with the architecturally-uninteresting bath water; and it must be noted with regret that the worst of these irresponsibilities have occurred under the direct control of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and that after a lapse of more than twenty years the publication of two important excavations is still awaited, though probably in vain.

No such charge can be levelled at Mr. Hamilton, whose brilliant skill in the field, coupled with a most scholarly and timely standard of publication, goes far to redeem the shortcomings of his predecessors. The achievement which he here so modestly records is all the more admirable, in that he was working not on a virgin site, but on one already examined in part by many different hands; and on a site, moreover, buried in sand, a material in which few excavators would seek to work from choice.

There is probably no other site in Britain that exhibits a longer sequence of almost continuous occupation than does Jarlshof. The earliest building, a fragmentary neolithic house, may be dated to the sixteenth century B.C.; the latest, the 'New Hall' immortalized by Sir Walter Scott, to the sixteenth century A.D. During the intervening millennia the history of the settlement falls into three main phases. To the first belongs the group of apsidal houses in the neolithic tradition, dated by pottery and the evidence of bronze-casting to the seventh or sixth century B.C. The use of the term 'courtyard-house' for these buildings implies that they were open at the centre, but both the evidence and the excavator in fact suggest that they were roofed all over.

The second phase is marked by the local beginning of the iron age, and by the appearance of round houses subdivided by radial piers and associated with souterrains; and the same basic tradition of building continues to develop, through broch, aisled round-house and wheel-house, until the end of the eighth century A.D. The third period begins with the establishment of a Viking settlement early in the ninth century, which continually changed and developed until its replacement by a farmstead, still perpetuating many Norse traditions, some five centuries later.

The disentangling of no less than seven phases of construction in this Norse settlement from a formidable complex of superimposed houses, yards and middens already excavated in part by other hands is a technical tour-de-force, whose difficulty is largely concealed by the lucidity with which the results are presented. Moreover the numerous finds, loose and structural, have been brilliantly interpreted by a fascinating process of back-formation from the structure and etymology of the modern Shetland croft, in which many Norse elements are preserved. The ghost of that remarkable Scottish antiquary Arthur Mitchell would indeed rejoice to see this fruitful application of his principle of rebuilding the past from its survivals in the present.

It is, however, no denigration of this admirable work to say that as a contri-

bution to knowledge Mr. Hamilton's elucidation of the sequence of iron-age round-houses must take pride of place. The Norse settlement at Jarlshof is, after all, no more than the extension of a culture already well-known in its homeland. The iron-age houses, on the other hand, are indigenous phenomena widely distributed on the west and north coasts of Scotland, whose interrelationships and chronology are still very imperfectly understood. The Jarlshof site provides some of the first reliably documented evidence on these problems; and it is here that one regrets most Mr. Hamilton's self-imposed restraint, in confining his discussion of the evidence chiefly to possible reconstructions of the various house-types. This appendix is in itself most valuable and important; but one could wish that it had been accompanied by another, in which the cultural, as distinct from the structural, problems had been discussed with equal imagination and insight. Admittedly there is a conflict of evidence, the continuous modifications of the same basic house-plan implying a continuing native population, whereas the changing pottery styles imply equally a series of incursions from outside. But on such problems Mr. Hamilton is largely silent; and this is a pity. Controlled speculation is the very life-blood of research, and has a perfectly proper place even in reports such as this, on which the imprint of the Stationery Office inevitably imposes certain constraints.

But such minor and negative criticisms in no way diminish the positive value of the report as a whole. Above all, Mr. Hamilton has demonstrated two principles which deserve the widest acceptance. The first is that even where previous excavation on a complex site has been widespread, though imperfectly recorded, selective re-excavation by a skilled director who knows what questions he wants to answer can be exceedingly fruitful. The value of such work has recently been abundantly shown, though never with greater success, in other fields of British archaeology. In planning future research, the claims of such re-examination of sites already partly explored deserve to be weighed more critically against the risks inevitably inherent in the excavation of virgin sites, which, let it be remembered, are always a wasting asset.

Secondly, it should be realized most clearly that at least half of the long history of Jarlshof falls within the historic period, formally speaking. Yet virtually the whole of that history, as now revealed, has been obtained by means of the purely archaeological techniques of excavation and comparative analysis appropriate more particularly to the text-free periods of prehistory. The aid given here to the excavator by documentary sources has been minimal, and of no greater or less importance than the ancillary information provided by scientific examination of organic and mineral specimens from the excavation. Moreover in at least one instance, the date of the initial Norse settlement of the Shetland islands, the evidence of archaeology has proved more reliable than the traditional literary sources. Nothing could demonstrate better the part played by archaeology in the writing, not of prehistory, but of history itself.

This volume is the first of the new series of archaeological reports to be published by the Ministry of Works. In the past the Ministry has shown a marked reluctance to recognize that excavation and publication are complementary and

inseparable. Since the beginning of the late war it is probable that at least half the excavations carried out in the United Kingdom have been sponsored and paid for, wholly or in part, by the State; but virtually no corresponding provision has been made for the preparation and publication of the results, though this usually involves far more time and trouble than the excavation itself. As a consequence of this unbalanced policy, many of these enterprises remain unpublished, a lamentable situation for which the Treasury is principally to blame. For it is widely recognized that the archaeological branch of the Ministry of Works cannot hope adequately to discharge its accepted responsibilities with the funds at present available; and it may be added that even the decision to publish the present volume through the Stationery Office was taken only after an abortive attempt to shift the burden to the shoulders of a learned society, at its own expense. The new series will be widely welcomed, not only for itself, but as a sign of a change of policy which has long been overdue.

As a prototype, the present volume gives little ground for criticism. The drawings of objects will provoke the admiration and envy of many lesser draughtsmen; the plates, with a few exceptions, reach a high standard, though a number of views of the buildings are the less useful through lack of a scale. The plans, on the other hand, in which there are several irritating reversals of orientation and inconsistencies of a minor kind, betray too clearly the hand of draughtsmen trained wholly in architectural conventions.

Finally, may one hope that Mr. Hamilton's great talents, in excavation and exposition alike, will be allowed to find further employment, and that what Scottish field archaeology has lost in him, England will yet gain?

R. J. C. ATKINSON.

The Bayeux Tapestry, a comprehensive survey. Sir Frank Stenton (general editor), Simone Bertrand, G. Wingfield Digby, C. H. Gibbs-Smith, Sir James Mann, J. L. Nevinson, and F. Wormald. 12 × 10 in. 182 pp., 150 illus., of which 14 in colour. London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1957. Price £2 7s. 6d.

Those of us who learnt history in childhood in an old-fashioned way did not expect to have to know any date earlier than A.D. 1066. We may have been told vaguely of the existence of people called cave-men, and even, perhaps, have remembered the date 55 B.C. and the name of Julius Caesar, but for all serious purposes our English history started with the arrival of William the Conqueror and the commemoration of his invasion in the Bayeux Tapestry. Scenes from it formed pleasing outline-illustrations in history books, for the schoolboy at Westminster there was a miniature reproduction of the whole of it running irrelevantly round the Chapter House, and in one way or another those long, mail-draped figures became an integral part of our historical background. In time came the usual irritating schoolmasterly hair-splitting; the Bayeux Tapestry must not be called tapestry, because it was needlework; it must not be accepted as a picture of what the invasion was like, because it might be a hundred or two hundred years later in date. Be that as it might, the earlier impression was the stronger, and our fidelity to the Tapestry remained unshaken. Small wonder,

then, that we have the warmest of welcomes for the detailed study of it now brought out by the Phaidon Press, with Sir Frank Stenton as general editor and the Pilgrim Trust as fairy godmother to make economically possible such a wealth of scholarship and illustration at so modest a price.

Taking the volume in general, it amounts to a triumphant vindication of what we used to believe, and liked to believe, about the work. Sir Frank has shown how closely it corresponds with contemporary Norman chronicles, Professor Wormald produces analogies, in point of detail, from English illuminated manuscripts, Sir James Mann illustrates actual arms and armour of the types depicted in it, and Mr. Wingfield Digby has much to tell us of the embroideries that were being executed in this country in the eleventh century and even earlier. The legend of Queen Matilda's working at it with her ladies can be relinquished without a pang, and it is an actual relief to be told that the death of Harold is represented not by the solitary gentleman pulling at an arrow in his eye or forehead, but the darker figure who has dropped his axe and falls, limp and open-mouthed, under the sword of an advancing horseman. This is much more obviously a death in battle, as we should expect it to be delineated.

But Sir Frank's contribution does far more for us than that. For the first time he enables us to see the story not only as history but as something very like poetry. As he points out, there is no vilification of Harold. On the contrary, he is presented as rather resembling Aristotle's conception of the tragic hero, a man of assured position and unquestioned nobility of character, who earns our admiration till he commits an error of judgment or of honesty that brings down upon him the reversal of fortune, the dreaded *peripeteia*, sending the spectators away awed with pity and terror that such things can be. The friend and kinsman of the Confessor is blown out of his course in the Channel (Dom Bernard de Montfaucon's interpretation of the Tapestry's phrase *velis vento plenis* is now apparently forgotten, but seems unquestionably the right one in view of the behaviour of Harold's mainsail in the picture) on to the inhospitable coast of Ponthieu. Arrested by the local landowner, he is taken out of the latter's hands by Duke William of Normandy himself, and entertained as a guest. He takes part in a short campaign in Brittany, distinguishes himself at St. Malo and is formally invested with arms by the duke after the surrender of Dinan. Then, perhaps, comes the *hamartia*, the point at which the hero takes the false step, or makes the wrong decision, that will ultimately destroy him. Harold is seen at Bayeux, taking an oath to Duke William upon two small but elaborate reliquaries. The word *sacramentum*, used in the description, had first signified a soldier's original profession of loyalty before he took the formal oath of allegiance, but was soon extended in meaning and came to denote the oath of allegiance itself, and its implications would be unmistakable to the literate of Bayeux. By suggesting this scene to us as 'the turning-point of the whole action displayed on the Tapestry', Sir Frank enables us to give the whole work a new and more significant shape. It is no mere chronicle of events in their historical sequence, it is the presentation of a tragedy with a well-defined opening, a central situation embodying a decision by the protagonist, Harold, and a sight of the ultimate, unhappy consequence.

At this point we are for once handicapped, albeit very slightly, by the way in which the excellent photographs are displayed. Presumably it could not be avoided, but it is to be regretted that the division of the plates has broken up two important scenes so that neither can be looked at in its entirety. The first is Harold's reappearance before his King. The greater part of this scene is given to us on plate 31, the remainder, on a much larger scale, in the splendid colour-plate on the opposite page, but it is impossible to see the group as a whole, and this is doubtless responsible for the editorial comment underneath, which describes Harold as 'accompanied by a follower bearing an axe'. Professor Douglas, when writing on the Tapestry in the appropriate volume of the *English Historical Documents* series, is surely nearer the mark. When we see the whole scene *in extenso*, from tower to tower, the group has a very different appearance. Edward sits on his canopied throne attended by *two* guards, one of whom ushers in to him an unarmed and extremely apologetic-looking Harold. That overt act of service under Duke William, and the subsequent oath of fidelity to him, are matters that will need a great deal of explaining away. For one thing, it is now impossible to have Harold quietly insinuated into the kingship after all by a last-minute change of policy on the part of the old king. The oath has been taken, Harold will have either to keep it or to break it, and either course may be ominous for England. Thus interpreted, the scene serves to intensify the importance of that turning-point that Sir Frank has pointed out to us.

So does the next scene but one. Montfaucon confessed himself at a loss to understand why the Confessor's deathbed scene followed the picture of his funeral instead of preceding it, and commentators from his day to that of the present volume, have occasionally said the same, without adding very much to it. It is significant, perhaps, that Mr. Wingfield Digby, in his detailed and interesting chapter on technique and production, makes no attempt to explain how such a mistake could have been made. This being so, it is permissible, surely, to assume that there has in fact been no mistake at all. The scene of the funeral is followed by another large group in which two officials are conversing with Harold and *telling* him that King Edward has after all named him as successor to the throne. With one hand the spokesman holds up the crown, and with the other he points to the scenes he is describing—the dying king addressing his liegemen, and the shrouding of his body for burial now that he has discharged his kingly office. Once again a particular Latin word has been chosen because it has an individual meaning. The word *defunctus* is not the same as *mortuus*, it stands for something more like the famous 'Thou thy worldly task hast done' of *Cymbeline*, and suggests that it is now for another to take up the task and the responsibilities of the crown. Sir Frank comments on the doubling-up of deathbed and burial, and queries the reason for relegating the event to 'what is virtually a parenthesis', but it is perhaps worth considering whether it is not an adroit way of rendering a pictorial *oratio obliqua*.

Something of the sort appears to be indicated in an earlier scene, where the excellent surprise-effect of William's messengers arriving at the court of Ponthieu is naturally followed by the explanation that they have ridden with all speed (and we can see them doing it) because their master has heard of Harold's arrival and

has sent for him at once. The conventional charge of 'carelessness' and 'transposed scenes' will not hold water if copies or tracings of the scenes in question are shifted round into strict chronological order. Duke William's messengers, in such a case, appear to ride furiously at their own master, with the Count of Ponthieu left at ever-increasing distance behind their horses' tails, and the attempt at achieving logical accuracy has resulted only in making nonsense of the design.

The chapter on costume carries less conviction than the works in which its author deals with later periods and can use his wide knowledge of actual examples. Comparison of the garments in the Tapestry with the enamelled memorial slab of Geoffrey Plantagenet at Le Mans, and with equivalent garments, similarly cut but rather better drawn, in the manuscripts of Matthew Paris, might have led him to modify some of his more dogmatic pronouncements. It is open to question, at least, to say that the Tapestry 'does not follow the manuscripts in giving tunics decorated neck-openings', when almost every tunic is shown to have a deep neck-band in a contrasting colour. If that were a coloured shirt worn underneath, as the article suggests, it would imply a degree of *décolletage* in the upper tunic that would be hard indeed to parallel elsewhere. The reader is advised to look at the axe-bearer behind King Edward's throne, at the spearman setting fire to a house at Hastings and at the light-armed archers on the battlefield itself, and to form his own conclusions.

The present Conservateur of the Tapestry, Mme. Simone Bertrand, has contributed an admirable summary of its history, particularly over the last two-and-a-quarter centuries, though the allusion to Smart Le Thieullier does not indicate that his notes on the Tapestry (admittedly little else than an English version of Montfaucon's) were not only studied by Dr. Ducarel but were published by him in an Appendix to his *Anglo-Norman Antiquities* many years after Le Thieullier's death. From Mme. Bertrand's account of the proceedings of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803 and the Germans in 1940 it would seem that study of the Tapestry has been regarded as an indispensable preliminary to every attempted invasion of England except perhaps that of the Spanish Armada.

The notes on the individual plates are naïve but useful, in that the very process of disagreement with them calls us to a more detailed study of the Tapestry itself and shows us how much more there is in it than we had noticed. The commentator finds it 'curious' that the troops assaulting Dol wear no armour, and that they go to Dinan 'over a curiously roundabout course' by way of Rennes. So it would have been, if they had been the same troops. What the picture shows us—though we have not noticed it before—is that Harold and the light horsemen, without hauberks of mail, ride to Dol by way of the quicksands of Mont St. Michel, while the main body, too heavily armed for that dangerous passage, has to go inland by Rennes and the head-waters of the Covesnon, to the attack of Dinan, in which Harold is not necessarily involved. The gift of arms that follows is not only a mark of honour, it is the conferring of a practical benefit, as Harold has arrived in Normandy without any, but the subsequent acceptance of arms and armour—at all times an expensive present—would be taken as carrying some obligation to bear them in the giver's interests.

The notes on the invasion pictures tell us of an army of 7,000 men and a fleet of 3,000 ships, which suggests undermanning of some of them, and there seems to be some confusion of thought between the Viking practice of displaying shields along the gunwale when in port and the later one illustrated here, where they are apparently stacked in an overlapping line down the centre of the vessel, beside the mast. The object at the Conqueror's masthead was identified by Lancelot and Montfaucon in 1730 as the gonfanon presented to William by the Pope, and the view of these two distinguished antiquaries, though dismissed here merely as 'an old and curious tradition', is borne out by the cross-headed staff and the method of mounting the standard from a crossbar, like the almost contemporary gonfanon of the Bishop of Urgel still preserved at Barcelona. Altogether, it seems more likely to be the Pope's gonfanon than, as now suggested, a masthead-light, which one would expect to look more like the open cressets with which the Norman soldiers, in an earlier plate, are setting fire to the palisades of Dinan.

And so the commentary goes on. The designer 'did not feel it worth while', we are told, to depict carved figure-heads on the ships drawn up on shore in plate 45. We look, and find that at least he felt it worth while to indicate the dowel-holes with which the heads had been pegged into place, and which only became visible when the ship was beached, dismasted and deliberately stripped of all movable and purloinable parts, but we might have missed this small but interesting detail had it not been for the editorial comment. There is a wealth of other examples which the reader will enjoy locating for himself.

Few temptations are more irresistible than that of attempting to explain points which wiser experts have left alone, and one may be forgiven, therefore, for hazarding yet another interpretation of the unexplained episode of the Clerk and the Lady, which immediately follows William's first reception of Harold at his palace. Can it be that the text of the inscription is meant to run straight on, and that the missing word is the auxiliary verb most frequently left out in Latin texts? If so, the word *ubi* refers not to the picture but to the palace, and the sentence runs 'Here Duke William comes with Harold to his palace, where (are) a certain clerk and Aelfgyva'. Mr. Wingfield Digby has told us how a clerical designer would prepare the cartoon for embroidery work, and perhaps himself transfer it to the material, and has even mentioned one Aelfgyth as a teacher of embroidery—and apparently quite an important one—in the very year of the conquest. Perhaps it is not entirely inadmissible to wonder if this is her work, and if the scene indicates a point at which she was once an actual eye-witness of the events described. Failing that, one can only suggest that the *oratio obliqua* technique is employed here as elsewhere, and that the figures illustrate the story—of only too obvious a kind—which Harold is telling with such animation to Duke William and his court.

M. R. HOLMES.