

Correspondence.

"EARLY CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS IN BERKSHIRE."

To the EDITOR of the QUARTERLY JOURNAL.

SIR,—Mr. Crake, in his valuable lecture on "Early Christian Foundations in Berkshire," gives ample reasons for his statement that the British race was exterminated in this district by the Saxon invasion. But I fail to understand his assertion "that no Celtic names, except here and there a river, remained." I read in Mr. Isaac Taylor's "Words and Places," p. 151 :—"The word *cwm* is very frequently used in Wales, where it denotes a cup-shaped depression in the hills. This word, in the Saxonised form *combe*, often occurs in English local names, especially in those counties where the Celtic element is strong." There are twenty-three parishes called Compton in England." Now, I find two of these parishes along the front of the Berkshire Downs. There also I find Letcombe, and along the Chilterns I find Huntercombe, Syncombe, Portcombe, and Wycombe. If there be any truth in the derivation of *Chiltern* which is most commonly accepted, as implying the *Celtern* hills, among which the Celts lingered longest, I presume that the meaning of Chilton on an offshoot of those hills in Buckinghamshire, and of Chilton beneath the Berkshire ridge, is to be sought in the same fact. But indeed I do not know a better example of a Roman-British place-name than Dorchester, for nothing but the spelling is Saxonised. Lastly, let me refer to Well-place, midway between the Upper and Lower Ichnield Ways at Ipsden, where a coin of Cunobeline was found by the late Mr. Reade; for it is usually said that the survival of the Welsh *plas* indicates the site of a British palace, and *well* looks remarkably like the word which we have in Wallingford and Wales.

It is interesting to note that close by this place is Berin's Hill, a traditional site at which the Apostle of Wessex preached. It is a pity that this old tradition of his name,—which we have also in Robert of Gloucester, "Seyn Byryn the byssop an holy man was,"—is disregarded by Mr. Crake, as by so many modern historians in favour of the "Birinus" of Latin chroniclers. He might as well go on to write Osbaldus and Kentinus. For St. Berin was undoubtedly a Teuton. The name, says Mr. Baring-Gould, "is probably Bjorn or Boerin or Berin, a compound expression of Bear in some form, High or Low German." ("Lives of the Saints," December 3.)

May I ask, further, whether the Diocese ever stretched "from Devonshire to the Humber and the East"? Did it ever stretch beyond the northern boundary of the West-Saxon dominions before it was finally removed to Winchester? Certainly, when the new Mercian see was afterwards fixed at Dorchester, it never included the West-Saxon dominions.

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