

Reviews.

CIVIC HERALDRY OF ENGLAND AND WALES. By C. W. SCOTT-GILES, M.A. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 18/- net).

Mr. Scott-Giles has taken a very pleasant and instructive heraldic tour of England and Wales and the result will be gratifying both to the student and the general reader. The book contains a record of the insignia of nearly six hundred local authorities and includes not only all true coats of arms, but also many heraldic but unauthorised devices which are of great interest and in some cases of very remote origin.

The author is of opinion—and there seems no reason to disagree with him—that the use of armorial bearings by local authorities can be traced to the practice of authenticating documents by means of official or corporate seals bearing distinctive and symbolical devices, and that among English boroughs this practice originated during the latter part of the 12th century and became general during the 13th and 14th centuries. If we remember aright the earliest known corporate seal is that of the Borough of Exeter. He further is of opinion that designs on the majority of early town seals fall into four categories—royal and seignorial emblems; religious emblems, especially the image or symbol of the town's patron saint; castles of defence; and ships denoting maritime interests. "As towns arose to importance and became increasingly conscious of their individuality and corporate spirit they began to imitate the state of the seignorial class, and one manifestation of this was achieved by placing on a shield the design on the town seal and giving it colours. The arms of Reading and Bedford were produced in this way." Mr. Scott-Giles gives many examples of the four categories into which he has grouped the early arms and indicates that in some cases the limitation of the heraldic field necessitated a departure from the exact design of the seal; but in the majority of instances the ancient device has been carefully preserved. We shall presently see that the problem for the research student

arises in some instances not so much in the origin of the arms as in the origin of the seal, and in very early examples the reason for the choice of the device on the seal is not easy to discover. In the case of the town of Reading this is particularly so.

In a work of this kind it is obvious that readers will turn almost instinctively to the arms of the county or town in which they happen to reside in order to learn what the author has to remark upon them. The importance of our own county borough is evidenced by the following observation in the preface: "To the general reader descriptions and illustrations of arms are of little interest unless accompanied by the story or significance which lies behind them, and it is this which I have been at pains to record. The five heads in the arms of Reading evoke no more than a passing interest until we learn that they commemorate the thousand-year-old crime of a jealous stepmother." Before we deal with Reading, let us make for Berkshire and the non-county boroughs within its borders which carry heraldic insignia. Mr. Scott-Giles has arranged his book in such a way that easy access can be had to any area concerned.

Of the county of Berkshire's own heraldic device, which has, by the way, received not a little adverse criticism, the author has this note: "The Berkshire C.C. employs a graceful device consisting of a stag standing under a tree and eating from its lower branches. This is not of an heraldic character, but it is placed on a shield surmounted by a royal crown flanked by sprays of laurel and oak. Beneath the shield is a scroll inscribed 'Berkshire.' This device is appropriate to a wooded county: 'Berkshire,' says Asser, in his *Life of Alfred*, 'has its name from the wood Berroc, where the box-tree grows most abundantly.' Its forests gave royal sport to Saxon kings; and William the Conqueror, who 'loved the tall deer as if he were their father,' had an eye for good hunting country when he chose Windsor for his residence and began its famous Castle."

Of this we can only say that the derivation of Berkshire from "the wood Berroc, where the box-tree grows most abundantly," is not universally accepted; and there is a school content to accept a Keltic origin and to follow the late Sir John Rhys, who

said: " Nothing serious stands in the way of the guess which identifies the name of the Bibroci with the Berroc, whence the modern name of the county of Berkshire is derived." The Bibroci occur in " Caesar " as members of a group living between the Thames basin and the Severn. It is thus possible that obscurity of the origin of a place-name may sometimes lead the heraldic expert astray. But that is no concern of the author of this book. And, in passing, it may be remarked that with all the galaxy of historic incident that has centred in the royal county, and the eminent figures, from Alfred the Great downwards, who have been concerned in its affairs, the efforts in the way of a county coat of arms are singularly unimpressive, when compared to the " coats " of other areas.

Now let us note the arms of the boroughs. Windsor: " Parted fesswise green and red in the chief a gold stag's head between the antlers a shield bearing the Royal Arms of France Modern and England quarterly and in the base a gold castle." There are slight ancient variations of this coat; but the insignia is obviously based on the castle and the hunt. Abingdon: " Green a gold cross flory between four silver crosses paty." It is highly probable, as the author remarks, that these arms were based on those of Abingdon Abbey, which were: " Silver a black cross flory and four black martlets." Newbury: " The Corporation of this town appears never to have applied for arms, but a castle with three towers, to signify the ancient fortress which stood a siege in the reign of Stephen and has long since disappeared, is used." Wallingford: " The Corporation has no arms but uses as a device a portcullis, presumably in allusion to the ancient castle which, having been held for Charles I, was destroyed during the Commonwealth. A fifteenth century seal bears the figure of an armed man on horseback having on his shield the Royal Arms of France and England quarterly, and on his helmet the Royal Crest of a lion statant guardant on a chapeau. Above the horse's head is the letter ' E,' and under its neck what may be an ' H.' The figure generally resembles that of Edward IV on his Great Seal, and probably represents him. Is it possible that the ' H ' was added, for political reasons, during 1470-1, when

Edward IV's reign was interrupted by the return of Henry VI to the throne for a few months? If so, the seal is of unusual historical interest. In the base of the seal is water, representing the ford from which the town derives part of its name." Maidenhead: The only comment the author has to make on this town is that the seal contains a maiden's head. This may be appropriate literally, but it perpetuates a legend which modern research has proved to be untenable. The original name of the town had nothing to do with "maidens" and was called "Elenton." Wokingham: Here again the Corporation had no arms. "The seal bears a sprig of oak with an acorn; this appears to be an allusion partly to the name, which, since the middle of the sixteenth century, has been spelt "Oakingham" alternatively with "Wokingham," and partly to the fact that the town was anciently situated in the Forest of Windsor."

And now we come to Reading, which, apart from its local interest, is certainly one of the most interesting "coats" in the country. "Arms: Blue five heads cut off at the neck in natural colours the centre one wearing a gold Saxon crown." Here is Mr. Scott-Giles's diagnosis: "These are recorded at the College of Arms, having been confirmed to the Corporation in 1566. The crowned head is probably that of Edward, King of the English (975-978), who was assassinated at the instigation of his step-mother, Ælfthryth, jealous that her own son did not occupy the throne. In expiation of the murder, Ælfthryth founded a nunnery (now St. Mary's Church) at Reading. The centre head is sometimes placed between the letters 'R.E.' (Rex Edwardus), but these do not appear on the thirteenth-century seal from which the arms were derived."

Not a little time and thought have been given to the origin of Reading's arms, and not a little confusion has resulted. It would, obviously, be unfair to the author of this book to embark upon a lengthy disquisition of this nature; but it may perhaps be said that the founding in Reading of a nunnery by Queen Ælfthryth in expiation of the murder of her stepson has never been proved by documentation, and that the inclusion of five heads in the device is an enigma which Mr. Scott-Giles has not

tackled. If the central head is conceded to the Saxon Edward, as the author suggests, of what significance are the four other heads? An ingenious speculation was made by Man in his *History of Reading*, published in the early years of the nineteenth century, that the five heads represented Leveva the Abbess and four nuns—a very small nunnery indeed, even in the tenth century! During the reign of Elizabeth the central figure of a king is supposed to have been changed to that of a queen out of compliment to her Majesty, and the four other heads were likewise transposed into females. As the counter seal of the Corporation, which is supposed to date from the thirteenth century, does not contain the letters “R.E.,” which Mr. Scott-Giles assumes to have been Rex Edwardus, it has been popularly supposed that they stand for Regina Elizabethæ. The fact also that the “escallops” of Reading Abbey, one of the greatest religious foundations in the land, nowhere appears in the town’s arms, is also significant. But research upon the knotty problem of Reading’s arms is still proceeding, and it may be that some further light will be thrown upon the subject at no very distant date.

In glancing over the many “coats” that have been so excellently drawn by the author and his wife to illustrate this book, there are a few which stand out for the bravura of their conception and the beauty of their design. We may perhaps be prejudiced in matters pertaining to the marriage of an ancient art with the practical details of the mercantile activities of modern corporate bodies; but the locomotive of Swindon and the Nasmyth steam-hammer of Eccles, not to mention several other oddly assorted combinations, appear to us to strike a discordant note when compared with the excellent emblems of many of the older towns.

It would be a lengthy task to make mention of a fraction of the historic associations which are called up by this survey of corporate arms, and we congratulate the author on the completion of what must have been a long and arduous, but withal an exceedingly interesting piece of work. It may be truly said that Mr. Scott-Giles has added to the reputation he already deservedly

bears in the field of heraldic research, and we can recommend to our readers without qualification this clear, incisive and able presentation of the historic insignia of England and Wales.

E. W. D.

ROMANCE OF THE WHITE ROSE. By GRANT R. FRANCIS, F.S.A.
(London: John Murray, 18/- net.)

It is perhaps only fitting that once again "Romance" should become entwined about the ill-starred Stewart cause and in the present volume the author has invested those tragic happenings of two centuries ago with a fresh thrill and a deeper significance, for he has discovered 'new material' and that, to a subject such as the one with which this narrative is concerned, is of tremendous importance. Few writers of modern fiction could have had so an inspiring opening as this: "we were seated, pleasantly tired, by a pine log fire in the cosy library of the 'place of Clunie' (Cluny Castle) with a wild October wind howling without, and flurries of the first winter snows hissing on the window panes. . . ." But "bonnie Prince Charlie" did not appear, although if such things could be, the scene was well set for such a heart-quaking advent.

As may be expected, any new volume on the '15 and '45 causes must repeat a good deal of the historic data, and reflect some of the considered political opinion, which have already been collated by former writers. The chief figures of the time have often been subjected to close, if not microscopic, scrutiny, and new facts are hard to come by. Every Jacobite hero has been on the easel before; some many times; but Mr. Grant Francis's discovery of original documents in the Charter Chest at Cluny (some of them now published for the first time) throws new light on such matters as the campaign of Graham of Claverhouse, and clears up much of the mystery which has for so long attached to the sinister 'Loch Arkaig treasure.'

The author has put many touches to his narrative which are not often found in works of a similar kind ; and this adds considerably to its interest. We know, from other works of his, that he has a deep and abiding regard for Stewart associations; and that he has produced an excellent and authoritative volume on old English wine glasses. We were, therefore, not surprised to find a chapter devoted to those secret and treasonable organisations known as the Cycle Club and the Oak Society, the former instituted by Sir Watkyn Williams Wynn, of Wynnstay, North Wales, who was the leader and prime mover of the Jacobite faction in the principality. There was much treasonable talk and abortive plotting at gatherings of these societies, often held in London inns with great privacy, and ' the Health ' was drunk in specially made glasses engraved with mottoes associated with the fortunes of the Pretenders. The author illustrates several choice examples of these fragile memorials of a shattered enterprise which still remain in private hands. The sad thing to relate, however, is that with much talk very little was done to afford the Prince that effective assistance when his star was in the ascendant.

Berkshire was certainly associated with the hopes of the Stewart cause and tradition has it that the young Pretender was in the neighbourhood of Ufton Court long after his enemies were convinced he had departed for overseas. And although the ' nest ' at Shottesbrook was more concerned with an earlier party of objectors, the Non-jurors, there is reason to think that a continuity of policy was pursued here to a much later date than is popularly supposed. But Mr. Grant Francis is concerned, naturally, with bigger fish ; with the Highlands and those romantic and rugged figures to whom loss of fortune and even life itself were small price to pay for ' the cause.' The Young Pretender still has power to move many English hearts and the romance and magnetism of the Stewarts have seldom been so pleasingly and ably portrayed as in this volume. We commend this book to our readers for it is readable and authentic ; and as we have before remarked, contains much new material which throws light upon a subject of perennial interest. There are many excellent illustrations. E.W.D.

QUEEN ELIZABETH. By MILTON WALDMAN.
(London: Longmans Green & Co., 12/6 net.)

The life of Queen Elizabeth has been a source of perennial interest to a variety of minds and despite the fact that the ground has been raked over meticulously many times, historians return again and again to the attack hoping to bring from the maze of intrigue and the mass of documentary contradictions new facts which will settle some, at least, of those problems which still perplex and annoy. Mr. Milton Waldman seems to have approached his subject from the point of view of an observer free from the trammels of preconceived ideas, while acknowledging his debt to Froude and a long list of previous investigators. He has grappled with a few knots and has possibly unravelled some of them. But we are a little less confident. The great enigma of England's greatest queen remains to us still unsolved and neither the confident verdict about Leicester being the Queen's lover nor the skilful analysis of foreign policy gets us any nearer to that puzzle of what was the loadstone that was Elizabeth. The truth of the matter to many is that one cannot detach or disentangle the woman from the Queen; the greatness of the latter is so frequently overshadowed by the turbulence of the former and the resultant mixture is the enigma. One has only to remember the outburst which ensued when Elizabeth learned that, after the death of Amy Robsart, Leicester had married Lettice Knollys without the royal knowledge or consent, to be able to assess the vindictiveness of the woman as opposed to the dignity of the Queen; for the Countess was completely ostracised for the remainder of the reign. And we note that the author accepts at face value apparently the popular historic conception of the infamy of Lettice Knollys. Again we are not so convinced of the continuous perfidy of one whom the Queen was pleased to call a 'she-wolf' and her daughter a 'whelp'; and this quite apart from any bias we may have from the fact that the lady in question was a member of a family who had close associations with Reading and Berkshire.

Whether some of the conclusions of Mr. Waldman will endure the test of time is uncertain; but of the universality of his

opinion of the power and might of the woman who ruled the throne of England without the aid of a consort for over fifty years there can be no question. She brought England from an abyss of misgovernment and ignominy and raised it to great heights of power and influence and only genuine qualities of statecraft could achieve this. That she was assisted in her task by men of marked ability cannot be denied; but she was also plucked at by hordes of disruptive minds. The continuous narrative form in which the author tells his story makes very pleasant reading and our readers may be assured that they will find this book far more engrossing than the majority that deal with the same theme. At times the prose reaches a very high standard; and the obiter dicta with which it is buttressed have depth and lucidity. The book has obvious merits apart from the skilful way in which the subject matter is analysed and presented.

Mr. Waldman does not take his narrative beyond the Armada and thus leaves the latter half of the Queen's reign untouched. We hope that he intends at a future time to complete his story by a second volume, for to some, the years between 1588 and 1603 are the more intriguing. It is certain that the readers of the present volume will eagerly await the findings of the author when he has summarised in whole what he has so successfully done in part.

E.W.D.

RIDES AND RAMBLES AROUND READING.

Our Hon. Secretary, Mr. H. T. Morley, F.R.Hist.S., with commendable energy, has projected a series of booklets entitled "Rides and Rambles around Reading," being brief guides to the topography, archaeology and ecclesiology within a radius of some twenty miles of the county town. The first two numbers have appeared and are illustrated with drawings from the author's own pen and pencil. We understand it is intended to issue some five or six more of the booklets if the response justifies the expense of production. We shall hope to give a more extended notice of these brochures in our next issue. The modest price of each is 9d., which should ensure a wide sale.

E.W.D.