

Reviews.

RIDES AND RAMBLES ROUND READING. By H. T. MORLEY, F.S.A. (Scot.), F.R.Hist.S. (Reading: Morley Service, 9d. net each vol.).

There is a growing desire to learn more of the charm of the countryside; its churches, ancient buildings, trackways, woods, fieldpaths, and the like, and it is a desire that should be fostered along right lines. Walking tours—one hesitates to use the expression “hiking”—are becoming increasingly popular; while 50-mile spins in a car after tea-time are now commonplace. It is obvious that some kind of guide is desirable, if not necessary, even in the district in which one resides; and nothing is more helpful than a booklet which one can carry, briefly setting out what may be seen and where to see it within a circumscribed area. We therefore welcome a new venture by our Hon. Secretary, Mr. H. T. Morley, who is well known for his interest in local archaeology, and which takes the form of brochures dealing with the countryside in a series of more or less circular tours around Reading. The first three have been published, and we understand they will be followed by about half-a-dozen more. No. 1 takes in Woodley, Sonning, Shiplake, Harpsden, Greys, Bix, Nettlebed, Stoke Row, Checkendon, Wyfold, Peppard and Sonning Common. No. 2 deals with Tilehurst, Sulham, Tidmarsh, Englefield, Bradfield, Stanford Dingley, Bucklebury, Brimpton, Aldermaston, Padworth, Ufton, Sulhampstead and Burghfield. No. 3 is the old forest country—Ruscombe, Waltham St. Lawrence, Shottesbrooke, White Waltham, Ockwells, Bray, Warfield and Binfield. Mr. Morley would be the first to admit that his booklets are not to be taken as works showing extensive research; the wayfarer whom they are intended to assist would not require such detail. Those broader details are included which the amateur antiquary and the lover of the countryside are able to digest. So the author has gathered together interesting facts and memorabilia from many and varied sources and put them into the form of a readable and brief survey of the district they cover. But it would be erroneous to suppose that the collation of material about one's

neighbourhood does not entail some concentration and care ; and condensation and selection are an art in themselves. There is so much of interest in the English village and highways, that few who pass through them, often, it is feared, at a speed which allows only a blurred impression, have any conception of the wealth of historic association that lies often in so small a compass. With Mr. Morley as your guide you may learn who is commemorated by an ancient brass in the floor of the church ; something of the fresco and wash drawings over the chancel arch ; something of old English wrought ironwork (a noble trade) ; the story of many an old farm or manor house and its predecessor the castellated stronghold ; the half-timbered cottages that nestle by the roadside waste ; Norman doorways, fonts and wooden effigies ; old wind and water mills ; local traditions of buried treasure (like that of the well at Page's Bottom, near Bix) ; woodland paths and memories of worthies who have long passed into the silence ; knights like the brave de Greys who fought at Crécy or the humbler padres of many a rural retreat. This is what the author will tell you.

Those who find healthful recreation in the countryside will be well advised to carry one or more of these booklets in their rucksack or in their car. There are numerous illustrations in the text, all from the author's own drawings, and these are an interesting and valuable addition. Mr. Morley is to be congratulated upon his venture, and we shall hope to see in due course the remaining volumes which he intends to issue if the response to the present ones be sufficient to justify the expense. It would not be in accordance with the rules of criticism if we did not mention that there are a few unimportant slips, mostly in proof checking. If the present volumes call for a re-issue, the author may wish to note that " Sherfield " Bottom, near Theale, should read Sheffield Bottom ; and that the number of authentic instances of the stabling of Cromwell's horses (sic)—like the beds in which Queen Elizabeth slept—may probably be counted on the fingers of one hand.

E.W.D.

THOMAS BEACH : A DORSET PORTRAIT PAINTER. By ELISE S. BEACH. (London : John Bale, Sons and Daniellson, Ltd. 12/6 net.)

At the moment of going to press the Editor has received for review a copy of " Thomas Beach, a Dorset Portrait painter," by Elise S. Beach, who is the great-great-grand niece of the subject. Miss Beach has been for many years a member of the Berkshire Archaeological Society and we congratulate her upon this memoir. An extended notice of the book will appear in the next number of the Journal.