

XV.—REVIEWS.

- 1.—*Teach Yourself Archæology* by S. G. Brade-Birks.
English Universities Press Ltd. 6s.

To summarize our present knowledge of times past from Palæolithic to Anglo-Saxon times and to make it interesting and intelligible to a novice is a task difficult enough, but the author has cast his net even wider and includes also in his survey geology, soil analysis, medieval architecture, heraldry, brasses, stained glass and even caligraphy. He has set himself a task which might well appal the hardest archæologist and the best tribute to his boldness and enthusiasm is the success of his venture. In clear and readable prose, avoiding the pitfalls of the didactic and the condescending, he covers this vast field, finding room for over a hundred excellent illustrations and even for occasional digressions into personal experience to elucidate or emphasize his points.

He seems to have had some difficulty in deciding whether the handbook is to be one on English Archæology or if it is to cover a wider field. The total exclusion, except for one illustration, of all Irish, Scottish or Welsh material, suggests that his survey relates to England only, in which case the inclusion of no less than eleven illustrations of Danish Bronze Age costume seems too many. Over twenty other illustrations are of Continental material, but they are more relevant to the elucidation of English finds.

It is inevitable, in view of the problems of selection and omission involved, that the author's choice, particularly of omissions, will be questioned. It is encouraging to find "Roman Walls" in the index, but to find the entry refers only to a reconstruction drawing of Roman Canterbury may

well leave readers from the northern province somewhat stunned. The total omission of the great Roman frontier defence system (which for brevity we call the Roman Wall), apart from mention that it exists and a reference under "Literature" to the Handbook, while almost half a page is devoted to pointing out that historians have omitted to notice a Viking raid into Kent in A.D. 753, seems to indicate some local bias of attention.

The chapter on Heraldry requires drastic revision in some respects; the account of its origin and original significance is excellent, but to say that the chief is "the best known and most frequently used" and to describe it in detail and then to dismiss the other seven ordinaries as "mere strips of coloured material" hardly suggests a serious approach to the subject. To illustrate a shield bearing three chevrons and to blazon it in blue and silver for the obscure Sussex family of Lewkenor instead of in the red and gold of Clare is almost an insult to that great house. The medieval knight certainly had a shield which may on occasion have been gilded, but to say that it was "either of gold, or gilded; or of silver"—surely cannot be what the author intends us to understand. To confine the books upon Heraldry referred to under "Literature" to one published in 1828 and to Volume I of the *Heraldry of Canterbury Cathedral* shows an almost wanton disregard of the standard works, to say nothing of several excellent shorter studies published in recent years.

In his introduction the author states that this book is "really like a lot of small books rolled into one" and it is as this that it should be judged; if a novice attempts to absorb the whole of its contents he may or may not teach himself archæology, but if he refers to and studies the sections which appeal to him, one by one, he will find a willing and enthusiastic guide who will interest and encourage him and who tells him clearly where he should look for further information.

W. BULMER.

2.—*Roman Britain and the Roman Army: Collected Papers*, by Eric Birley. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. Pp. xii + 196. Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1953. 15s.

What working archæologist or historian has not suffered from the inconvenience of a scattered literature? There lies the merit of the offprint; but our collections of offprints are everlastingly incomplete. Our Vice-President, Mr. Birley, has met his friends' difficulty, and obliged a wider public, by republishing in book form some sixteen of his papers dealing either with the military history or the organization of Roman Britain, or with the officers of the Roman army and their careers. In theme, therefore, the book is a unity; but seeing that the papers were published over a period of 18 years, and first appeared in no less than seven different periodicals, of which one foreign, the extent of the debt we owe to his perspicuity and his energy becomes at once apparent.

A word of congratulation must go, too, to Messrs. Titus Wilson, both as publishers and as printers. They have evolved a format which, unassuming though it be, grows on the affections; and their typography gives a pleasure not invariably to be derived from the appearance of the articles in their first form. In a book of this kind misprints must be inevitable, but I have not noticed one. The fascinating, and indeed important, engraving from a bronze roundel illustrated on the dust-cover, though long since published, is welcome as likely to be new to most, and was well worth reproducing. Everyone will regret that its significance is nowhere expounded in the text; while the *Cabinet de France* eludes identification by one, at least, to whom the resources of Paris are by no means unfamiliar. The elaborate indexes are a model of their kind.

That this is a work of scholarship goes without saying. It is, moreover, scholarship of a rather special kind. Great learning is there, naturally, on every page; enormous skill,

too, in the assembly of widely scattered evidence, and in the perception of relevance in the seemingly irrelevant; above all, an exhilarating readiness to quarry in the most unpromising of sources. By comparison with most of the day-to-day research on the Roman period as carried on in the area of Hadrian's Wall, the lines of approach may seem limited; but, in compensation, along those lines the whole Roman world is laid under tribute. For, throughout, the province of Britain is held strongly in perspective as an outlying part of a far greater whole, and a whole that was controlled by surprisingly direct methods from one centre—Rome. With all this for a backcloth it is not to be wondered at that many of the conclusions reached have historical bearings altogether wider than it might be thought possible to derive from the austere, if strenuous, discipline of prosopography.

There is, however, a still more exciting quality in this work, and that is its ingenuity. It is exciting because it enables, indeed impels, those who, like your reviewer, are wholly incompetent to form a judgment on the technicalities, nevertheless to follow the argument simply for its own sake, just for the fascination of it and to see how the thing is done. This sense of excitement should alert the reader, and put him on his mettle; indeed it must, or he will run the risk of accepting all the conclusions as proven. And that would be a pity, for not all are so. No one is more persuasive than Mr. Birley in the process of building a probable upon a possible to reach a position; and his lucid prose, combined with his candid manner, make it hard indeed to say just why in the end the pea is sometimes *not* under the thimble, or indeed where exactly it has gone. If, however, the reader will brace himself to read with his mind as well as his eyes, he will double his enjoyment, and will besides be in the position more fully to admire, as your reviewer has done, the strength and texture of the argument where it is strongest.

Taken as a group these sixteen papers constitute an impressive witness to what, it should be recalled, is only one

facet, though an important one, of the author's contribution to Roman studies. The standard set is high, and is maintained with remarkable uniformity. There is, however, one group, published during or since the war (Nos. X, XIII, and XIV), which seems to call for special mention. In these three articles Mr. Birley opens what we may hope is the beginning of his formal treatment of the organization of the Roman army, a subject to which he has devoted so many years of research. Long may this series continue, till the time comes for a second gathering like the present, or better still, perhaps after the appearance of the *Fasti*, for a presentation in full form. Meanwhile what is on record here must enhance the standing of British scholarship in the wider world of classical learning.

J. D. COWEN.

- 3.—*Studies in Early British History*, edited by Nora K. Chadwick. 8vo., pp. 282. Cambridge University Press. 1954. 30s.

This remarkably interesting book is tough reading, not only because of the knowledge it presupposes but because the material itself is often difficult and intractable, demanding a perilous mixture of objective and subjective judgment. The Dark-Age scholar, like the Homeric, gropes towards links with archæology, hoping that these and tradition may between them make history. That this is possible is well known: but the Dark Ages are not so rich in archæological material, and here literary tradition is considered only in relation to sparse and laconic sources. The work, however, was well worth doing; and philology, in the skilled hands of Professor Jackson, is made to play a reliable part, long wanted and itself the fruit only of long and arduous discipline.

The first three chapters are edited remains of the late

Professor H. M. Chadwick, founder of the studies which the book reprints and commemorates. His summary of the opinion concerning the *Notitia* is judicious and valuable, but if, as must be admitted, the *Notitia* is not an up-to-date official document, though derived from official sources, it can no longer be used to support anything beyond the state of affairs revealed by each several part at the date for each established. Thus, while the section *per lineam valli* may be dated to A.D. 297-367, no sure date can yet be assigned to other sections of the command of the *dux Britanniarum*; for arguments based upon omission will not stand, while the coin-lists from many north-western sites go as late as those from the north-east, as Collingwood long ago observed. An important exception, as Stevens has stressed, is Chester, where the coins support abandonment under Maximus. Thus, letting the *Notitia* lie on the table, it might be said that coins prove the existence of a sub-Roman polity, however organized or sub-divided, extending northwards to Tyne and Solway, which lasted, to judge from the hoards of *siliquae*, into the second or third decade of the fifth century, and was contemporary with the *comes Britanniarum*, whatever his relation to it. But what the clerks of the *Notitia* knew of this is anybody's guess. They knew nothing of Cardiff, *pace* Chadwick, or of west coast defences in general, though these were keeping Somersetshire safe until at least A.D. 408. Then, about 425, arrives Vortigern, to whom Prof. Chadwick devotes a valuable chapter, suggesting that as king of eastern central Wales he extended his rule over the abandoned province, when kings were already springing up in other regions. If he used men from Pembrokeshire, that would explain the Ogham stone at Silchester. As to his ultimate fate, Mrs. Chadwick observes how later British and Breton stories made him a saint, after a wild life of sin and heresy: and while she will not commit the reader to acceptance of this as history, religious experience has recorded stranger things. Of the later British kingdoms Professor Chadwick gives a valuable account. It may be doubted whether

Vortigern's territory corresponded strictly to that of the historic Cornovii, whose capital barely outlasted the fourth century. But the Silures' capital, Venta, gave its name, in the manner of late-Roman Gaul, to *Gwent* and its people the *Gwenhwys* (*Ventenses*) and the state, which became a monarchy, included Archenfield. Kenchester would therefore be its northern stronghold, till the *Magonsaetas* seized it. The Dumnonian dynasty is thoroughly discussed, but its genealogy is not free from ambiguity, and Mrs. Chadwick has added a long appendix discussing attempts at reconciliation. Eastern dynasties, which so soon perished, are little known; only a Kentish dynast is recorded, though Elafius about A.D. 447 should not be forgotten. As for the language, Professor Jackson gives a profound and thorough analysis of the changes which converted British into primitive Welsh, Cornish and Breton, a most valuable chapter for those who cannot afford his larger work. The character of early Welsh tradition is next singularly happily studied by Mrs. Bromwich. Her sketch of the relation between bardic works and early Welsh history, the *Mabinogion* and Irish bardic tradition is clearly and convincingly drawn, with happy allusions to Gildas. The parallel with Alcuin's rebuke (p. 144) is worth remark, for the Saxon and Celtic worlds were fundamentally less different than sometimes thought. The treatment of Vortigern in the hands of such tradition converted the realities into a fairy tale, whose analysis by Sir Ifor Williams is accepted by Mrs. Bromwich. This is a rather different approach from that of Professor Chadwick, but the fact that the two are not really mutually exclusive is an example of the inherent difficulty of the material. Important also are Mrs. Bromwich's analysis of the *Triads* and their relation to other forms of literature, her study of the movement of stories from northern Britain to Wales, and her distinction between *englynion* and *cyfarwyddiadau*. These are a contribution not merely to history but to the history of literature. The cause of the transfer of material from northern Britain to Wales is con-

sidered by Mr. Peter Hunter Blair in his study of the Bernicians and the northern frontier. Commencing with a study of Bernician literature, with its strong historical predilection, he passes from the early kings and their progress to the Christian kings and northern expansion, where he adds valuable details to current historical accounts from Eddius's life of Wilfrid, particularly concerning the organization of the northern frontier. Among scholarly footnotes which deserve particular attention are those upon *Degsastan* (p. 157) and *Niuduera regio* (p. 168). A fuller treatment of the subject does not exist.

The last two chapters are also of unusual interest. The consideration of the early Welsh Church by Owen Chadwick approaches the question of early dedications in the light of Church practice contemporary with their supposed date. He points out that abnormality is not to be accepted without proof and instances convincingly the question of episcopal consecration. In dedication, the practice from the sixth to the ninth century was elsewhere very conservative, but from thence onwards much more eclectic and involved wholesale rededication to a particular saint. The view, that dedications reflect a contemporary, or almost contemporary, picture of the journeys of early saints, must therefore be accepted with caution. Finally Mrs. Chadwick discusses intellectual contacts between Britain and Gaul in the fifth century. This is a development from the studies of Zimmer and Kuno Meyer, but it is prefaced by a valuable discussion of Gallic, Irish and British bardic traditions which supplements and reinforces the treatment by Mrs. Bromwich. There is an excellent treatment of the Romano-British episcopate. But to add to St. Paula's reference to British pilgrims the possibility of a British origin for the anonymous accounts of pilgrimages reasonably thought to be written for Gauls submits the reader to considerable strain. Pelagius, on the other hand, was an undoubted product of British Christianity and his heresy focused papal attention upon the island. But Pelagian literature need not all have been British, and this

may cast doubt upon the British origin of letters assigned by one editor to Fastidius and by another to Agricola, son of Bishop Severianus. With St. Patrick we return to orthodoxy, and Mrs. Chadwick has much that is valuable to say upon his literary conventions and their relation to contemporary fashion, while the close connexion with Gaul evinced by the style of fifth and sixth century British inscriptions is also stressed. Other connexions provide more room for hazard. The suggestion that the *ducatus* of St. Germanus (he was not *comes*) was that of the *Tractus Armoricanus* is difficult enough: but that he succeeded Exuperantius or that Palladius was associated with him were better left unsaid. Similarly, the ambiguity between Briton and Breton which affects the story of Faustus and Riocatus leaves so much doubt upon the matter of a British connexion that Stevens' caution upon the point is not out of date (*Sidonius Apollinaris*, 77, note 1). Mrs. Chadwick adds, I believe, to the volume of evidence, but makes decision no easier. The chapter ends upon a brilliant and striking comparison between the conventions of Sidonius and Irish written sagas, and of Continental and British death-scenes, Christian and pagan. It is surely rightly contended that the early Irish poems in Latin, the prose of Gildas and the humour and settings of the *Hisperica famina* preserve the authentic ring of sound classical tradition. No less is owing to Mrs. Chadwick for the editorship of this book than to her late husband for its scholarly inspiration.

I. A. RICHMOND.