

## Reviews

*Early Christian Ireland.* By Máire and Liam de Paor. 8½ × 6 in. 264 pp., 31 figs., 77 plates and 5 maps. London, Thames and Hudson. Ltd., 1958. Price 25s.

This must rank as a highly successful volume in the *Ancient Peoples and Places* series. It is beautifully written, with real gifts of style, and exceptionally well illustrated, a profusion of original maps and line-drawings supplementing well-chosen and effective plates. But, above all, it is an all-round, whole study of early Christian Irish society and its fortunes. Hitherto the subject has lacked this balanced survey. There have been distinguished studies on different aspects of early Celtic society, particularly on the arts (for example, Françoise Henry's brilliant and original works, *La Sculpture irlandaise* and *Irish Art*, and her recent slighter study, *Early Christian Irish Art*; Mlle. Micheli's survey of the MS. material, F. Masai's essay, and outstanding articles by Henry, Nordenfalk and others on different aspects of the art-problem): and there has been, since the Harvard Archaeological Mission of 1933, a series of fine reports on the excavation on modern lines of field-monuments in all parts of Ireland.

What has been lacking has been the assimilation of all this fresh data into a coherent picture, and that is what this book provides. In addition to the chapters and sections dealing with the applied arts, there is a fine survey of the monasteries of Ireland, and an important, long and original chapter on the life of the people, covered in no other work. The chapter on the Vikings, who struck at the rich Irish civilization of the eighth century, set up at what is now Dublin the first Viking state recorded in the history of Western Europe, and founded Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow and other towns, is, again, a fine and useful survey.

If the object of the series is to inform and interest the general reader and the student, the de Paors' book does this to perfection by being up to date, authoritative, a delight to read and extremely well thought out and presented. The system of breaking up the running text into clearly-defined sections with projecting side-headings is a great help in this respect. The chapter 'The Life of the People', for example, is broken up into 'The Social System', 'The People', 'Economy', 'Dwellings', 'Husbandry and Food', 'Pottery', 'Crafts', 'Communications and Transport', 'Dress', 'Weapons', 'Amusements', and 'Strengths and Weaknesses of Irish Society'.

A short, brilliant Introduction sketches the geographical personality of Ireland and outlines the history of Irish antiquarianism. At the end of the book are full and up-to-date bibliographies for each chapter, but a better system of cross-references between the text, bibliographies and footnotes should be devised. The notes belonging to each plate are well done and informative, but it is a pity that short identifications could not appear on the plates themselves. These are particularly good throughout. For a long time books on early Insular and Irish Art have been badly illustrated, partly through faults of reproduction and photography, partly through the need, in the more original works, to cram in a mass of previously unpublished material, which led to reproductions at excessively small scales. Pls. 17, 18, 24 and 63 of *Christian Art in Ancient Ireland*, pl. 76 of *Irish Art* and figs 1 and 2 on pl. lxxvi of *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900* are examples. A much better standard was set by Dr. Henry in her *Early Christian Irish Art*, and in the present book we have first-class selection, printing and photography and many fine enlarged details that are most informative and make a great impact (pls. 3, 23, 37, 49 are good examples).

A constant interplay between literary and archaeological sources is a refreshing feature of the book. Quotations are always apposite, often graphic (like the item, 'a bronze cauldron, into which a hog fits', in the inventory (p. 78) of the possession of a 'mruigfer', one of the middle grades of the landholding class), and often beautiful, even

as rendered into English, like the lyric fragment (p. 67) roughly contemporary with the Book of Kells:

My tidings for you: the stag bells  
Winter snows, summer is gone.

Wind high and cold, low the sun,  
Short his course, sea running high.

Deep-red the bracken, its shape all gone,  
The wild-goose has raised his wonted cry.

Cold has caught the wings of birds;  
Season of ice: these are my tidings.

But it would be helpful, at least for the art-historian or archaeologist, to be told more about these sources, and a future edition might well have a section specifically dealing with them. 'The great mass of legendary, topographical, historical and genealogical material', we are told (p. 15), 'was compiled and written down first in the eleventh and twelfth centuries . . . , and again in the seventeenth.' The lyric quoted is of the ninth century. Of the inventory referred to in the Law of Status or Franchise we are told (p. 78) 'the precise numbers need not be taken too seriously', but the law tract gives 'at least an indication of what was considered appropriate to the household of a middle-ranking land-owner in the seventh century'. One would like to be told more about the dates and critical use of these sources, which do so much to fill out the picture of early Celtic society. How far can twelfth-century or later sources be used to infer sixth- or seventh-century conditions?

If one is to make reservations at all about such a distinguished addition to the literature on early Christian Ireland it would be to say that, as the authors would be the first to agree, many problems in the field remain unsolved. Indeed, one of the strongest impressions left by this refreshing book is the amount of further clarification and investigation that needs to be done. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more so, in spite of the important recent advances, than in the field of Irish art and its origins. To this old and controversial subject the authors bring a balanced and independent outlook which encourages one to treat their judicious reading of the situation with respect. Basic issues, however, remain unsettled.

In chapter iv, 'The Art of the Golden Age', a number of queries thus arise. Is there any evidence that filigree was added to the repertoire of the Irish metalwork, as the authors seem to imply (p. 110), in the sixth or early seventh centuries? The authors are presumably thinking of the New Grange ring (T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pl. xxxii, 4) and the Garryduff bird (pl. 17). But the New Grange ring must be, as the authors say (p. 121), an import, and it is presumably of Roman date. May not the Garryduff bird be an import also? In any case, is the supposed sixth-century stratigraphical dating of the Garryduff bird watertight? ('Found in the earliest level, associated with pottery of Roman type'—F. Henry, *Early Christian Irish Art*, pp. 25-6). The scrolls on it, if worn, appear to have been identical with those on the Ardagh chalice (pl. xxii) and are in the same style as the scrolls reserved in red enamel on the hinged strip at one end of the Monymusk Reliquary (*Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, LXVIII (1933-4), pl. vi). The natural date for the Garryduff bird is the early eighth century. The authors seem to accept later on (p. 121) the idea that filigree was introduced in the late seventh or early eighth century.

Again, did 'the two eclectic eighth-century art-styles of Ireland and Northumbria' really originate in the monasteries of Lindisfarne and Iona (p. 111)? And what do the authors mean by two styles? There is no evidence that any style originated at Iona, or that the Book of Kells was written there. But, more fundamentally, was the art of this

period generated primarily in the monasteries? The monasteries certainly adapted the art styles to the codex. But the authors themselves follow the view that the fusion of styles (Germanic, Celtic, etc.) occurred first in metalwork. Is it not possible that the crucial part was played by lay workshops associated with the royal courts? The fusion can be seen beginning in pagan or secular metalwork in the mid-seventh century in the Sutton Hoo jewellery (millefiori enamel insets mixed with garnets, and imitation champlevé effects) or the Benty Grange helmet (red enamel and garnets on the same object, *Sheffield Museum Annual Report*, 1955-6, pp. 13-15).

Again, as an illustration of the broad basis of early Celtic art in its initial phases, its genesis in the 'monasteries of the *paruchia Columbae*' rather than exclusively in either Ireland or Northumbria, it is said (p. 111): 'In the seventh century, Durrow, in the middle of Ireland, was in many respects closer to Lindisfarne, on the far side of England, than to near-by Clonmacnoise.' If this statement is to mean anything at all, it involves the assumption that the Book of Durrow was decorated at Durrow. On the next page the authors agree 'as is now fairly clear' that it was written in Northumbria. There is no reason at all to claim that it was decorated in any other place than that in which it was written.

Again, it is said (p. 112) that the Book of Durrow (the crucial document for the origins of Hiberno-Saxon Art, in so far as any one document is crucial) 'belongs to the series' of MSS. represented by the *Codex Usserianus Primus*, the *Cathach of St. Columba* and MS. Ambrosiana (Milan) D. 23 Sup. What the authors presumably have in mind is the fact that the Book of Durrow has carpet-pages, and the first known carpet-page (or page of pure ornament) appears in D. 23 Sup.; and that the lettering and initials of Durrow are evolved from types seen already in the *Cathach of St. Columba*. But the Book of Durrow, while undoubtedly it has a strong Irish legacy, stands apart from these earlier MSS. in significant ways. The carpet-page in D.23 Sup. is innocent of the slightest trace of Insular ornament, and the MS. itself is an Orosius, not a Gospel-book. The Gospel-book in the series is the *Codex Usserianus Primus*. But this tells us (the beginnings of Matthew, Luke and Mark are all preserved) that the system of carpet-pages and of decorative stress on the openings of the gospels and prefaces, i.e. the characteristic decorative architecture of Durrow, had not yet come to be applied in Ireland to Gospel-books; the decorative emphasis in the *Codex Usserianus Primus* falls in the antique manner on the colophons. The Book of Durrow stands apart from these three earlier MSS., and also from the MS. Durham A II 10, as a new creation. On the other hand, it is scarcely possible to say that the Book of Durrow 'stands somewhat apart from the main stream of Irish art, simply because the borrowed elements had not been absorbed into the Irish tradition' (p. 115). There is no evidence that there was any Irish tradition before the Book of Durrow in which 'the borrowed elements' had begun to be absorbed. It is in the Book of Durrow itself that one sees them in the act of being assimilated, and seen in this way it stands, not apart from the main stream, but in the middle of it. On p. 114 it is said that the composition of the animal ornament in the Book of Durrow, 'with the ribbon-like bodies looped in a rhythmic movement, departs from Anglo-Saxon usage'. On the contrary, the rhythms may be said to be typically Anglo-Saxon, occurring for example in such pieces as the ring-chain animals of the Bury St. Edmunds plaque (Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, pl. xviii,e), the processions on the back of the Faversham brooch (Åberg, *The Orient and the Occident in the Art of the Seventh Century*, Part I, fig. 25) or the surging creatures along the edges of the Sutton Hoo nielloed gold buckle.

A point of some interest arises in connexion with colours and pigments. A new scientific approach to the pigmentation of manuscripts (the first-fruits of which are forthcoming in the text volume of the Lindisfarne Gospels facsimile edition) opens a new dimension of study (the palettes of different scriptoria) and emphasizes the need for precision in these matters and especially in terminology. It would be unfair to criticize the authors in any way for repeating from authoritative works what we now

see to be incorrect identifications. But these identifications carry art-historical implications, and they are mentioned here to show that the subject is developing. Thus what Françoise Henry (in the stygian gloom of the Ambrosiana) considered quite reasonably to be a shade of blue in D.23 Sup. (a colour not found in Durrow) proves on microscopic examination to be verdigris mixed with white lead, and essentially a dull green (p. 112). Again vermilion (a colour popular in Byzantine MSS.) does not occur in the Book of Durrow, nor does the vermilion-red tone; the pigment is red lead and the tone orange. Madder (p. 102) is, as Dr. A. E. Werner assures me, never used in early manuscripts. The purple dye, evidence for the manufacture of which was found by Dr. Henry at Inishkea (p. 103) was not, in fact, used for manuscripts. The purples of Lindisfarne and Kells are made from the then Mediterranean plant *folium*. Lastly, there is no metallic gold in the Book of Kells (p. 128). Since 'yellows' are also mentioned one gets the impression that 'gold' means metallic gold. The point is of interest because of the abortive attempts to use metallic gold at Lindisfarne (as seen in the Lindisfarne Gospels) and its expert application to vellum at Wearmouth/Jarrow, as revealed by the *Codex Amiatinus*.

It is doubtful whether the Book of Kells follows continental MSS. at all (p. 128). The authors accept A. W. Friend's brilliantly-argued case for the derivation of its Canon Tables from a Carolingian MS. of the Ada school. But McGurk has shown that the model it followed for its Canon Tables was one circulating in Northumbria (*Scriptorium*, ix, 105-6): and it can further be shown that the decoration of that model was Northumbrian; the foliage of Kells, often supposed to be of continental origin, also has Northumbrian roots, as the Leningrad Bede shows (*Scriptorium*, xii (1958), 182-207).

To pick up a number of other isolated points, the evidence of the bronze vessel from Nordre Kaupang in Norway (pp. 44-5) can have no relevance to the use of the Insular hanging-bowls, although the explanation of their use as vessels used in the liturgical washing of hands, made out by Liestøl on general grounds, is interesting. The Nordre Kaupang vessel is not a hanging-bowl at all and not even an Insular type: its runic inscription is presumably secondary and need not bear any reference to the purpose for which the bowl was originally made. It is said that a scene on the face of the Monasterboice Muiredach's Cross, reproduced on pl. 56, which is usually identified as Pilate washing his hands, depicts a hanging-bowl. Unfortunately this detail cannot be seen in the illustration.

It would have been interesting to have had the authors' views on the date and significance of the Fahan Mura slab, the silver plates with thick interlace of the Domnach Airgid and the Carndonagh Cross. It should be said that while thick interlace occurs in the Durham MS. A II 10 (a MS. earlier than the Book of Durrow) it is not the thick interlace with double contours (p. 000) of the Book of Durrow. The triangular knots of f. 3 r of MS. A II 10 foreshadow contoured interlace in that the pigment only covers the central part of the ribbon. Neat and precise double contouring (though not necessarily of interlace) is a typical feature of MSS. which can now be claimed as having been produced at Lindisfarne (Durham A II 17, the Echternach Gospels, and the Lindisfarne Gospels itself). But thick interlace without double contours continues, and is found in later contexts, a notable instance being on eighth-century bowls in the St. Ninian's Isle treasure from Shetland, discovered since *Early Christian Ireland* went to press.

It is a mistake, however, to attach too much weight to the sections, interesting though they are, which deal with the problems of Irish or Hiberno-Saxon art. The most original and useful chapters, to the archaeologist and general reader alike, are probably those on Ireland and Rome, the Life of the People and the Monasteries. Finally, it may be said that throughout the book the discussion of architectural matters is at an unusually high level. As a whole the book is imaginative, finely balanced, scholarly and delightful. It is very much to be hoped that, kept up to date and perhaps supplemented a little, it will run through a long series of editions.

R. L. S. BRUCE-MITFORD

*The Relics of St. Cuthbert.* Studies by various authors collected and with an historical introduction by C. F. Battiscombe.  $12\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$  in. x+561 pp., 58 plates. Oxford: for the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 1956. Price £12 12s.

Very few individual finds can be so important in the study of the Anglo-Saxon period as the objects found in 1827 below the floor of the feretory of Durham Cathedral, where the reputed remains of St. Cuthbert had lain since the Reformation. These objects, the relics of St. Cuthbert, now exhibited in the library of Durham Cathedral and recently cleaned and re-examined, are here republished in this impressive volume. The book is enormous (it weighs all of ten pounds) and though it might, more conveniently, have been divided into two, or even three, separate volumes, it is a remarkable piece of book production, worthy of the highest traditions of the Oxford University Press.

The introduction, by Colonel Battiscombe, tells the story of the relics from their first burial, on the death of St. Cuthbert in 687, through the re-opening of the grave in 698 and the miraculous ninth-century journeyings of the coffin until its final translation to Durham in 998. The story continued through the various openings of the shrine until the 'frightful ravishment . . . of the relics of the saints' at the Reformation and the scientific investigations of the tomb in 1827 and 1899. The offerings at the shrine and the shrine itself, 'of fine and costly marble all limned with gold', have all disappeared and to-day only the carved, wooden coffin, the pectoral cross, the portable altar, the comb and the various embroidered and figured textiles remain to indicate the quality of the lost material.

In the strict medieval sense of the term the bones of a saint are relics and these are discussed by Colonel Battiscombe in his introduction. I would have liked to see here a full anthropological account of the bones found in the coffin, on the basis of Dr. Selby Plummer's report published, rather obscurely, in the *Northumberland and Durham Medical Journal*, after the opening of the tomb in 1899. It would surely have been worth while to relate the state of the bones as they were then with the statement of the anonymous author of the *Rites of Durham* that, at the time of the desecration of the shrine, one of the legs of the skeleton was broken by the smith who opened the coffin. In fact the whole problem of the identity of the skeleton needs further and more thorough investigation. The secret Benedictine tradition that the body of the saint was re-buried by a number of faithful monks at the Reformation receives short shrift from Colonel Battiscombe. He ignores some of the evidence completely: for instance, he does not even mention the passage from Canon Fowler's article where the statement of Serenus Cressy (dated to 1688) is quoted that the body of St. Cuthbert at that time was 'no doubt in the hands of some devout Catholics'. If this passage can be taken to imply the existence of the secret Benedictine tradition in the second half of the seventeenth century, we have evidence of the tradition at a period fifty years earlier than that allowed by Colonel Battiscombe. There is no reason why the statement of Serenus Cressy should not be dismissed, but the mechanics of the dismissal should be shown in the text of the book and not ignored altogether. Colonel Battiscombe's final argument against the Benedictine tradition is most tendentious; he puts forward the theory that the monks, who are supposed to have secretly buried the body, would be guilty of treason and that it would therefore seem 'unlikely that the men who were about to receive appointments on the new foundation would have taken such a risk'. While all the evidence indicates that the body revealed in 1827, and again in 1899, was indeed that of St. Cuthbert, there seems to be little excuse to dismiss the problem too lightly.

Dr. Colgrave follows Colonel Battiscombe with an article on 'St. Cuthbert and his times' which, with the excellent study of Father Grosjean on the problem of the alleged Irish origin of St. Cuthbert, puts the relics into their historical perspective. Mr. Hohler writes most eruditely of the Durham services in honour of the saint, proving conclusively that the mass in honour of St. Cuthbert, in its original state, can be assigned to Lindisfarne before the middle of the eighth century. He prints the services

in detail, with the aid of a most complicated array of sigla. Dom Anselm Hughes contributes a complementary chapter on medieval polyphony at Durham.

Dr. Kitzinger's study of the decorated coffin-reliquary is one of the longest and most important sections of the book. His fresh reconstruction of the coffin is entirely convincing and very properly demolishes the nineteenth-century reconstruction by Canon Greenwell. He shows that the idea of the wooden coffin-reliquary is derived from Gaulish, and ultimately early Christian, sources and proves conclusively that the coffin is the original *theca* in which St. Cuthbert's body was laid in 698, and not a later substitute. His interpretations of the artistic influences of the coffin, and indeed of seventh-century Northumbria, will be of lasting interest to the archaeologist. His clear demonstration of the Mediterranean origins of the iconography of the carved figures reminds us again of the Mediterranean influences introduced into England by such prelates as Theodore and Benedict Biscop. Professor Dickens's discussion of the inscriptions, written with incisive economy, completes the study of the coffin. One curious fact is that, in the hundred-odd pages of text devoted to the coffin, the wood from which the object is made is not identified; one is forced to rummage in the introduction and the appendix to find out that it is oak.

Mr. Bruce-Mitford discusses the pectoral cross on the basis of Sir Thomas Kendrick's classic description. He shows conclusively that the cross is of seventh-century date and not, in the words of Sir Thomas, 'the solitary example remaining to us of the goldsmith's work of the Britons in fifth century Strathclyde'. Mr. Raleigh Radford has produced an acceptable solution of the problems raised by the silver casing of the portable altar, convincingly reconstructing a seated St. Peter on the front. His reconstruction of the back of the altar is a little less happy. There seems to be no reason why the circular central panel of the back should not be eighth-century work, and contemporary with the rest of the ornament on that side, rather than a later addition: a gold bracteate decorated in the *pressblech* technique from Wye Down, in the British Museum, has a very similar design and must be dated to the late-seventh century. Mr. Radford, quite properly, draws a parallel with the Witham pins for this panel, but dates them to the ninth century. I prefer to retain the conventional dating to the eighth century for this group of pins. This, however, is but a minor criticism of a very important study.

Mr. Peter Lasko discusses the ivory comb of St. Cuthbert, which has hitherto been dated to the eleventh century, and re-dates it convincingly to the seventh, thus identifying it as one of the original relics.

Professor Mynors and Mr. Powell discuss the Stonyhurst Gospel book and confirm that this was the *liber evangeliorum* removed from the coffin at the translation of 1104. Mr. Powell is perhaps on dangerous ground in agreeing with Miss van Regemorter that the design of the central panel was intended to symbolize Christ and the four evangelists. His discussion of the interlace ornament and the step-pattern is unnecessarily confused, but his description of the binding and his historical conclusions concerning it are detailed, full and convincing.

The stole and maniples, with the other textiles, are considered in great detail from both a technical and an art-historical point of view. The stole and maniples are undoubtedly those given to the shrine of St. Cuthbert by King Athelstan in 934 and are most important examples of early English embroidery: it is extremely interesting to find the fragment of embroidery from San Ambrogio at Milan introduced into the discussion with the implication that it is English. Mr. Hohler's discussion of the iconography of these pieces is enormously important. Among other highly interesting statements he makes the extremely cogent point that 'the iconography used on embroidered vestments in the Dark Ages existed by its own right and was not a mere reflection of that to be found in the illuminated manuscripts'. Mr. Freyhan's article, on the place of the stole and maniple in Anglo-Saxon art of the tenth century, tends to complicate matters by going beyond the framework of its title; it is not quite clear

whether he considers the Byzantine origins of certain motifs of more importance than the place of the vestments in the art of Anglo-Saxon England, or vice versa.

The achievement of the Cathedral Chapter in publishing this great work is worthy of the highest praise, and though we may lament with John Bale, bishop of Ossory, who wrote at the time of the Reformation that 'our posterity may well curse this wicked fact of our age, this unreasonable spoil of England's most noble antiquities', we must be thankful that so much remains to delight our eyes and stimulate our minds.

D. M. WILSON

*Medieval Costume, Armour and Weapons.* By Eduard Wagner, Zoroslava Drobná and Jan Durdík, translated by Jean Layton. Folio, 72 pp., 383 plates. London: Andrew Dakers Ltd., 1958. Price £5 5s.

The latter part of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth saw an unusually close and lively connexion between the kingdoms of England and Bohemia. King Richard II had taken a Bohemian bride, the sister of Wenceslas IV. The occasion of the marriage was credited—by Elizabethan writers at any rate, albeit none too accurately—with the introduction of such foreign luxuries as side-saddles and a way of dressing the hair like horns, and conversely the religious and philosophical doctrines of John Wyclif were inspiring John Huss, and the nobles, knights and peasants who supported him, with the zeal that was to express itself in their famous movement against the exclusive domination of Rome. We may welcome, accordingly, the gesture of producing a work in English devoted to the costume, arms and armour of 1350 to 1450, mainly as illustrated from unfamiliar Czechoslovakian sources.

Dr. Zoroslava Drobná has contributed the section on costume, and Dr. Jan Durdík those devoted to armour, arms, banners and horse-trappings, while Mr. Eduard Wagner has collaborated with him in the chapter on military carts and has drawn the illustrations throughout. Of the first two scholars it may be guessed, from internal evidence, that they are historians, possibly art-historians, but without any special acquaintance with the intricacies of costume, armour or arms. Dr. Drobná gives a lively account of the variety of trades and crafts connected with the making and marketing of clothes in fourteenth-century Prague, and expatiates now and then on the sumptuary restrictions and proclamations directed against 'the poorer and non-aristocratic classes of feudal society, however wealthy they might have become' (which sounds rather like a contradiction in terms), but she cites no evidence for some rather surprising statements about dress itself.

She says, for instance, that the long-sleeved shirt or under-tunic was 'cut from one piece'. This would be so wasteful in principle and difficult in practice, and is so very much at variance with ordinary ideas on the subject, that one is reluctant to accept it without some attempt at evidence in justification. A few pages further on, likewise, we are told that when tight undersleeves are visible in fifteenth-century representations 'we must quite definitely assume that it was a question of buttoned-in sleeves which could be changed at will, and that the undergarment . . . had now entirely disappeared'. To which one is tempted to reply with Shylock 'On what compulsion must I, tell me that', and to adhere to the ordinarily accepted interpretation for want of any real proof of the contrary.

Dr. Drobná would appear to be a specialist in embroidery, and it is to be regretted that limitation of space prevents her from giving very much of her knowledge of this subject. She arouses our interest likewise by mentioning the actual remains of royal costume found in the cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague, but after claiming them as practically unique in Europe she gives us no illustration, nor even a description, either of the garments themselves or of the reproductions in the National Museum and the Museum of Industrial Art. On the other hand, she arouses interest and curiosity by her citation of various unfamiliar manuscripts—the Abbess Kunhuta's *Passional* of 1320 (her date of 1420 is surely a slip of the compositor), the Velislav Bible of 1340 and the

Wenceslas MSS., of the turn of the century, and leads one to hope that trustworthy reproductions of these may become available some day in western Europe.

In the same way Dr. Durdík introduces us to the names of unfamiliar and fascinating authorities. The Master of Vyšší Brod, the Master of the Trěboň Altarpiece, and the Krumlov *Mirror of Redemption* are all new to us, and all sound most impressive, so that we should like to see more of them. The text, however, suggests an imperfect understanding of the art of war in general, and the wearing of armour in particular, so that while factual statements may be generally accepted, the conclusions drawn from them are to be regarded more often with suspicion. For instance, when the sword and dagger are shown to be attached to the breastplate by lengths of chain—by no means an unfamiliar practice—we may accept the obvious inference that ‘the chains were probably designed to prevent the weapon from getting lost if knocked out of the hand’, but when figures from the King Wenceslas Bible are reproduced without sword or dagger, and with the chains swinging loose from their attachments on the breastplate, Dr. Durdík assures us that the chains are ‘to ward off the blows of the enemies’ swords’, and that is a little too much to swallow.

It is interesting to find certain forms of arms and armour claimed as Bohemian in origin, and sometimes the claim appears to be justified. If the dates given are correct, the war-hat with its brim scoloped out like eyebrows and prolonged into a nose-piece between them would appear to be illustrated in Bohemian sources rather earlier than its appearance in Germany or its familiarization at the hands of Hieronymus Bosch. But perhaps the author weakens his own case now and then by overdoing the note of democratic patriotism. The armies of the Hussites are regularly represented as a host of half-armed, simple peasants (which would have annoyed a leader like Žižka very much indeed), but at the same time we are assured that ‘not even the best helmets made of steel and fitted with every kind of gadget could protect the ruling lords’ from the strokes of their famous flails. One cannot very easily have it both ways, and the attempt to do so shakes one’s confidence in the author’s objectivity, and consequently in his scholarship.

The main part of the book, however, is given up to illustrations. There are well over three hundred plates, some in monochrome, some in the simple, cheerful colour-scheme of a nursery wallpaper. The examples are selected without discrimination and reproduced, only too often, with a degree of inaccuracy that seriously impairs their value. The figure of Wenceslas IV, from the votive picture of Jan Očko of Vlašim, is particularly interesting by reason of its resemblance to the portraits of Richard II of England, but how are we to know that the resemblance is not illusory, when we see how widely the figure of Jan Arnolfini in pl. 76 differs from that in his portrait by Jan van Eyck? A study of the armoured figures shows that the artist has never made up his mind whether leg-armour had its hinges on the outside or the inside of the leg, and a gentleman on pl. 14 (one of those with the loose chains already mentioned) has his hinges on the inside of his left leg and the outside of his right.

A good many of the illustrations are copied from illustrations in other people’s books, and what matters here is that they are copied wrong. The hundred-year-old conjectures of Viollet-le-Duc are reproduced as if they were the meticulous drawings of actual effigies by Stothard or of actual arms by Meyrick, neither of whom, by the way, is mentioned in the Bibliography, though Demmin and Laking are to be found there, together with Sir James Mann’s edition of the Churburg armoury, here attributed to Count Trapp alone. Striking and attractive examples occur now and then, like the fine master-headsman from the St. James Altarpiece (wherever that may be) with his white apron rolled ceremonially about his waist, or the studies of Bohemian flails drawn from examples in the Prague National Museum, but the book as a whole is inclined to be irritating to those who already have some knowledge of the subject and may well be seriously misleading to those who have not.

MARTIN HOLMES



*Medieval England, an Aerial Survey* (Cambridge Air Surveys, ii). By M. W. Beresford and J. K. S. St. Joseph. 11¼ × 7¾ in. xiv + 276 pp., 117 air photographs and 28 maps and plans. Cambridge: University Press, 1958. Price £2 5s.

This is a delightful and fascinating picture book, consisting of more than 111 aerial views, reproductions of a number of field-maps and a learned commentary. After an introduction in which the authors discuss the aims, methods, and limitations of the survey, there is a large section entitled 'Fields and Villages' which comprises about half the book, followed by smaller sections on 'Towns' and 'Industrial and other Features' (which include roads, bridges and a hundred meeting-place). 'It will be noticed,' write the authors, 'that the human activity which is illustrated is primarily economic. . . . The choice is not governed by any belief that medieval man was exclusively an economic creature, but because it is the visible and tangible remains of his existence which a camera records.' The question which the authors pose is not what medieval England was really like, but how much of it can be seen from the air.

In some parts of the book the contribution which aerial photography can make to our knowledge is self-evident. Deserted villages are a case in point, and since Mr. Beresford writes about them with authority, the commentaries on them are amongst the most interesting in the book. The village fields are also seen more clearly from the air than from the ground, and the authors have made good use of their photographs to show that, even though ridge and furrow may occasionally be modern (as Dr. Kerridge has claimed), the great mass of it is ancient; this is proved, not only by reference to the field maps of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (reproduced beside the modern photographs), but also by the way in which roads and hedges overlie the strips. On agrarian matters the text and illustrations are always helpful. If anyone is uncertain of the meaning of furlongs, selions, tofts or crofts, he will find that this is the book for a quick, convincing and visual answer.

But if there are advantages to be had from the use of aerial photography, there are also disadvantages when it becomes the exclusive form of illustration. The authors frankly admit that they have had to concentrate on the compact type of English village at the expense of those villages which are 'a wide scatter of individual houses', since 'the width of the scatter means that a photograph which takes in all the relevant area would have to be on a very small scale'. In consequence, what we are shown is primarily the *open* fields of England; a glance at the distribution map is enough to make this clear. Though there is a chapter entitled 'other field systems', it is perfunctory and includes only one air-photograph. The great contrast which Maitland drew between 'a land of villages' and 'a land of hamlets' is thus obscured. Might it not have been better at this point to resort to some other form of illustration if aerial photography was impracticable? Maitland used Ordnance Survey maps, but he was writing before the days of the aeroplane.

To the present reviewer it seems that the real interests of the authors and the real point of the aerial photographs coincided only in about half the illustrations of this book. Sometimes the authors are trying desperately not to write about something which is not illustrated. At other times they are taxing their ingenuity to find some medieval significance in non-medieval illustrations. In some cases their ingenuity is rewarded, as in the illustration of the 'rings' at Knowlton (fig. 15), but in other cases it is not. The comment on the picture of Stretton-on-the-Fosse (fig. 27) is self-contradictory. Fig. 109, the Nassaborough Hundred Meeting-place, is a fine illustration of a Roman road, but unrewarding for its professed subject. The real point about this meeting-place (which was not at the junction of three parishes as stated in the text, but of two) was that it was almost in the centre of a vast circle of villages, only one of which is visible in the illustration. The comment on Burford (fig. 66) misfires, since much of it is based on the assumption that the place-name means 'the ford by the burh' instead of 'the ford by a hill'; and there were local stone-quarries there long before 1435.

But when all is said and done, the fascination of the book lies in its illustrations.

One might have welcomed a larger scale of reproduction—the enlargement of fig. 57 on the dust-cover is a great improvement—but even the most captious historian must recognize that what he has got is good value. Many pleasant hours can be spent over the illustrations, and the reader will often find that he is stimulated into competition with the authors, to see if he cannot find more medieval significance than they. Two examples may be given.

Fig. 29 is a delightful picture of Great and Little Gransden. The two villages can, as the authors say, be presumed to have had a common origin; indeed their name means Granta's valley. The church of Great Gransden (mentioned in Domesday) stands on a hillock between the two villages—the parish boundary runs along the churchyard wall—and was presumably the centre of the original settlement; it looks as if it ought to have been the centre of a prehistoric earthwork, but no crop marks can be seen in the illustration. The authors are careful to point out the parish boundary, explain that it is also the county boundary between Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, and observe that 'the general line of the county boundary makes it clear which county had annexed which village, since it is Huntingdonshire which makes a great sweep eastwards to take in Great Gransden'. It is, as the authors say, a 'freak of tenurial geography'. But when did it occur? Domesday Book (i. 191v) records that the abbey of Ely held Little Gransden (Cambs.), but that Great Gransden (Hunts.), at that moment part of the royal demesne, had formerly belonged to Earl Ælfgar (i. 203v). Ælfgar had been successively earl of East Anglia (1052-7) and earl of Mercia (1057-62). Is it not possible that when his earldom was transferred in 1057, he may have moved the county boundary so that his village of Great Gransden also was transferred from East Anglia to Mercia?

Fig. 73a is an interesting aerial view of Wallingford and shows the Anglo-Saxon *burh* admirably. Founded as a military fortification against the Danes, it never seems to have enjoyed more than moderate commercial success. In 1128, 1129 and 1130 its burghers were too poor to pay their 'aid' to the King, and even today a considerable area within the ramparts has not been built over. The authors observe that, according to Domesday, eight of the 276 closes (*hagae*) in the borough were destroyed to make way for the Norman castle, but they do not point out that the main street northwards out of the town must have been deflected for the same reason (cf. Totnes, fig. 74). Its original course can be surmised from the aerial photograph and is marked by a parish boundary in fig. 73b. The photograph also makes it easy to see how the river was once much broader here, and fordable. We know that there was a bridge by 1066, because it is mentioned by William of Poitiers, but whether it or the ford which preceded it was on the precise site of the present bridge is uncertain; both photograph and plan give some slight indication that it might have been on the south side of St. Peter's church instead of the north. Across the bridge, on the Oxfordshire side, a shallow ditch can be seen enclosing a segment of the river-bank; it marks the county boundary between Berkshire and Oxfordshire, which here departs from the stream, presumably in order to provide Wallingford with a bridgehead defence in its own county.

These are small details, but they help one to view a familiar landscape with eyes refreshed. For this reason we believe that historians and archaeologists will enjoy brooding over the pictures in this beautiful book.

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*Il vetro di Murano dalle origini ad oggi.* By A. Gasparetto. 294 pp., 203 photographic illustrations, of which 16 in colour. Venice (Neri Pozze, 1958). Price £2 17s. 6d. (Lit. 5,000).

It is strange that Venice, above all places the 'home' of glass-making in medieval and modern times, has had to wait so long for an up-to-date, scholarly account of what glass it has made and is making. Mr. Gasparetto has combed the literary sources and studied the extant glasses, and is at the same time familiar with the processes and

technical details of the Venetian manufacturers, ancient and modern, so that his book may be accepted with confidence as an authoritative guide to the work of Venetian 'maestri' (gaffers) throughout the years and to how their prowess influenced glass-making elsewhere in Europe (and indeed throughout Asia also) during the centuries of Venetian dominance. Easy to read, and well arranged, it can be recommended with confidence not only to specialists in the history of glass, but to all who have need of the knowledge it imparts.

A short first part sets the stage by outlining the story of glass-making in pre-Venetian times. Part II then discusses the history of the Venetian industry. In dealing with its origin Gasparetto emphasizes that most, if not all, Venetian techniques were known to the Romans and practised by them in Italy, yet he does not claim a direct Roman descent for the Venetian industry. He suggests, indeed, that the Lombard invasion brought a break in continuity, and finds the first trace of a Venetian worker in a reference to a certain Domenico, *fiolarius* (maker of glass flasks) amongst those who signed the gift of the Isola di San Giorgio to the Benedictines on 20 December, 982. Yet it seems certain that the glasses found in Lombard graves in Italy are of local manufacture, for they are unlike contemporary glasses north of the Alps, and we may wonder, therefore, whether Gasparetto is right in disclaiming any continuity, especially now that the existence of a *fiolarius* at Venice has been established as early as 982. Though we know little of Italian glass-working in late Roman and early medieval times, it would seem most likely that continuity existed; for the only alternative is to assume a re-introduction of glass-making from the east, and the tenth century is too early a date for such an assumption to seem feasible.

The earliest traces of the Venetian industry which Gasparetto gives are all documentary. He can only produce one juglet (fig. 20) which may be as early as the fourteenth century, and we have to await the middle of the fifteenth century before any large series of glasses of undoubted Venetian origin can be cited. These are deep blue and green glasses, mainly tall-stemmed goblets, with enamelled decoration—luxury ware of the highest class. Examples (here illustrated, figs. 23, 25, etc.) may be seen both in the British Museum and in the Victoria and Albert Museum. We can but wonder whether this is a true picture and whether further research even in Italian museums, let alone elsewhere, would not produce more examples of the earlier Venetian work. Venetian glass was exported to England at least as early as 1399, according to a Venetian State document (pp. 107, 256), and remains of Venetian vessels of the fourteenth or even earlier centuries must exist: the trouble is that so little is known of the shapes of medieval glass other than *Wald-glas* that we cannot recognize them when we see them, and unstratified fragments of medieval Venetian ware may well have been mistaken for fine glass of some other period or country. There is, however, one source which might enlighten us greatly if it were properly tapped, and that is contemporary pictures. Gasparetto makes reference to these on p. 87 and elsewhere, but does not consider them in detail or illustrate more than a few (and that, regrettably, not very clearly). He dismisses them to some extent as illustrating only the '*vetri di uso molto semplici*' and not '*i preziosi vetri smaltati*': but that surely is in some ways a merit rather than a defect, for it is the fine glasses and not the ordinary ones that we can already recognize in our museums. If we wish to know what the other kind were like we must first of all study contemporary illustrations.

The full flowering of the Muranese industry roughly covers the period 1450 to 1670: thereafter, though glass never ceased to be made in the area, Venice never again held undisputed primacy in glass-making. There was a revival in the mid-eighteenth century and again in the mid-nineteenth and the industry is also prosperous today: from 1800 to c. 1830, on the other hand, little but bead manufacture existed to keep the industry alive.

The full story is well told—even if summarily in places—by Gasparetto, and he also discusses and illustrates many of the most important extant products of the industry—

not only vessels, but also: (*a*) mirrors, which were a special line of Murano during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, made by the opened-cylinder process like muff window glass, and not by casting, a process invented in France in the late seventeenth century; (*b*) beads ('conterie'), which were made from the middle ages onwards in imitation of precious and semi-precious stones, and even for export to the Levant, as we know from a shipwreck of 1327 (p. 184), but whose real importance as objects of commerce and exchange did not begin until the era of world voyages and conquest in the sixteenth century; (*c*) window glass, made no doubt both by the crown process (the Venetian 'rui' or 'rulli'—small panes of *c.* 5 in. diameter usually) and the cylinder or muff process, and both plain and stained; and (*d*) mosaic cubes, which must have been a very flourishing industry here, particularly in the early middle ages.

One of the most valuable aspects of the book is the lengthy bibliography, which not only cites the relevant modern literature, but gives detailed references to the original source-material and particularly to the Venetian State Papers, on the contents of which so much of the early story of the industry must be based. Lengthy references to, and at times quotations from, these are also given in the text and notes. There is also a most useful glossary of Muranese technical terms, which will be particularly helpful to non-Italian readers, seeing that the Muranese terms are in general so different from the frenchified ones which have attained so much currency in the modern industry.

The lavish illustrations are on the whole good and clear, and the coloured ones are of a high standard. A defect, and a serious one for the student, is that neither in the captions to the plates, nor in the text or footnotes (so far as a careful check revealed) is there a single attempt to give a scale for any of the illustrations. It is not good that we should have to guess the size of a bowl, say, or beaker: it is even less fair to expect the reader to guess the size of, say, mirrors (figs. 140-2) and glass panels (figs. 97-9). Nor has the author been well served by some of the photographs supplied to him by museums, and it is excruciating to see many of these fine Venetian glasses, particularly colourless ones, photographed against a black background so that they appear as little more than ghostly forms with part or all of their contours pretty well invisible. Figs. 62 and 64 (Murano Museum), figs. 76, 78, 87 and 94 (Victoria and Albert Museum), and figs. 89-91 (British Museum) are gross instances of this fault: and that colourless glasses can come out clearly and well against a light background is amply shown by figs. 61, 63 and 66 (Murano Museum), figs. 92 and 101 (Victoria and Albert Museum) and figs. 15 and 16 (British Museum). Is it too much to assert that glass should never be photographed against a dark background?

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