XI.—REVIEWS.

1.—*Prehistoric Ireland*, by Joseph Raftery. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ ins.; pp. xvi + 228. Pls. XVII, figs. 267. Batsford, 1951. 16s.

Among many true things Dr. Raftery has written in this long-expected and most welcome book of his, none is truer or more in point than the opening sentence of his preface. "Irish archæology," he says, "has been distinguished by nothing so much as by the lack of works of synthesis dealing with it; above all, there is little of a popular nature which attempts to explain the Irish prehistoric past to the general reader." This gap Raftery has set out to fill, and most happily he has succeeded.

It cannot have been an easy book to write. Prehistory in Ireland has always been bedevilled by too much legend, and, till the other day, by too little fact. The late Professor Macalister spent a lifetime crusading against the legendary overlay; but, so far as factual knowledge is concerned, it was not until the arrival of the Harvard University Expedition in 1932 that the tide may be said to have turned.

In 1937 Mahr delivered to the Prehistoric Society his famous presidential address "Prehistory in Ireland". Though published only as a paper in the Society's transactions, this essay (with O'Riordain's supplement covering 1938-48) has served ever since as the sole effective text-book in the field. But that is meat for the professed prehistorian, and it is not very fully illustrated. It is clearly with these two facts in mind that Raftery has written the present volume. He proceeds on a plan which might well be followed by others addressing themselves to a similar public. Over one quarter of the book is given to introductory chapters designed

to put the general reader thoroughly into the picture. In this fashion the author disposes of "The Personality of Ireland", "The Chronology of Prehistoric Ireland", "Digging Up Ireland's Past", and "The Field Monuments of Ireland". Thus documented the reader may pass on to the remaining chapters, which trace the prehistory of the country in chronological sequence.

For the student who has some acquaintance with a literature directed to the prehistory of England, France, Germany and the other countries of northern and western Europe, these earlier chapters will be perhaps of even greater interest than the rest. Though he will meet little that is new to him on the general subjects of chronology or excavation, all this introductory section is written from the point of view specifically of Ireland. To find these wide subjects here brought into focus from a point lying beyond us in the Atlantic is a strange, and a salutary, experience. It is one well worth undertaking.

There is at present no satisfactory evidence for the appearance of man in Ireland in palæolithic times. Ireland's prehistory begins with the mesolithic, and thence the author carries us right through to that point (*c.* A.D. 450) where Christianity supervenes. His final chapter on the Iron Age is of particular interest, as this is a subject which Raftery has made his own, and on which he is to-day the leading authority.

Criticism on points of detail will not here be attempted; nor would this be easy, as the author has confined himself to expressing generally agreed views, and has avoided controversial ground. Even so one may observe that his account of the chronology of bronze spearheads is at variance with the latest and, one may be permitted to believe, best opinion now current in this country; while his derivation of the halberd from central Europe, instead of Spain, is a reversal of the normal view of the matter. In this he may, indeed, be right, but the truth remains at best an open question.

No comment on this book would be complete without a

reference to the illustrations. For their profusion and variety we can feel nothing but gratitude. Here, for the first time, we have in one volume a bird's-eye view of the whole of Irish prehistory—both field monuments and man-made objects, supported by a series of maps. It is a unique contribution to our understanding of the whole. In these circumstances to complain that many of the illustrations are too small, as many certainly are, or of their arrangement on the page, which at times certainly irritates, would be both ungrateful and beside the point. But one cannot help noticing that once again, as so often in Irish archæological publications, a number of the illustrations seem to be taken from prints which have been heavily over-exposed; while the technical production of some of the blocks results in that slightly blurred and unfinished effect, which again is noticeable in much of the archæological literature of the country. This is the more to be deplored inasmuch as many of the plates, particularly of the greater field monuments, are in every way unexceptionable and a credit to all concerned. It is to be hoped that it is the latter which will set the standard for Irish archæological illustration in the future.

Although this book is about Ireland, and distinctively Irish, one is conscious all the time that it has been written against the background of European prehistory, and by one whose outlook and scholarship are essentially European. This is just as it should be, and is not the least of the merits of this most attractive and most useful introduction to its subject.

J. D. COWEN.

2.—*The Farne Islands, Their History and Wild Life*, by Grace Watt. Country Life Ltd., London. 30s.

I feel that I cannot do better, as an appropriate opening to this review, than to quote from Miss Watt's own memory of Mr. Russell Goddard's words regarding the Farnes as a

whole: ". . . the full beauty and charm of the islands could only be felt when the last boats had left for Seahouses, and the many thousands of birds which were never seen by visitors came to land."

I can thoroughly endorse this statement, for I was so fortunate—many years ago—as to stay with the watchers on Brownsman for a week at the end of June for two consecutive years; and, without a doubt, those early summer mornings and late evenings provided a wealth of charm—both ornithological and scenic—which are absent at the height of the day.

Miss Watt's book, whether from Mr. Goddard's notes, or from her own keen observation, has the delightful facility of setting before her readers that which they may fail to realize themselves; that it will also remind past visitors of happy hours they have spent in such glorious surroundings, and will—I expect—encourage those who have not yet taken boat there to do so at an early opportunity.

Birds apart, it is indeed good that Miss Watt should have stressed the fact that the Farne Islands have a great Christian tradition behind them; both from St. Cuthbert's sojourn there, and because of their close proximity to Holy Island, the birthplace of English—as distinct from British—Christianity.

May I underline this fact, and to hope that visitors will ever remember—when admiring the placidity of St. Cuthbert's ducks on *his* Island—that this Farne is holy ground, and that we have been left this precious heritage from a time when our Faith was struggling against heathen times.

It is of great interest, and probably news to many people, that Monks House was originally a store-house, and the author's following paragraph certainly bears out the care with which the profit and loss account of the House of Farne was kept: even a halfpenny profit in these days of astronomical debits would oft be a blessing!

In the chapter on local history, it is pleasing to note that William Darling, Grace's father, took an active interest in the bird life of the Farnes; and that he corresponded with John and Albany Hancock, thus beginning a close connec-

tion between the bird sanctuary and the Hancock Museum, a connection which was strengthened by Russell Goddard, and becoming more intimate year by year.

Of interest to visitors past, present and future will be the fact that there are no fewer than twenty-eight islands at high water, although many of them are very small; and it is appropriate that the author should call attention to the botanic beauties of the larger islands; for, now that part of Farne is closed to the public for the greater protection of nesting eiders and terns, the natural rock garden composed of thrift and other flowers can blossom unspoilt and yet free for all to see.

The Farne Islands are, first and foremost, a sanctuary for those bird species which breed there, and also for the Atlantic seals which prefer to deposit their calves in late autumn, not—one would think—the most appropriate time for a mammal to carry out its reproductive processes! Miss Watt rightly points out, however, that the remaining months of the year, ornithologically speaking, are by no means devoid of interest. Many surprising examples have already been noted in both spring and autumn, many of them due to the skilled and expert eyes of both Miss Watt herself and of Russell Goddard; added to by the pen of the late Harry Tully, whose early death is deplored by all Northern Naturalists.

In the future, however, we may look forward to many more exciting arrivals, for Dr. Ennion—living at Monks House—intends, with the active co-operation of both the Farne Islands Committee of the National Trust, and the Natural History Society of Northumberland and Durham, to make a systematic record of the spring and autumn migrations by means of the Heligoland trap and other devices. Thus, as years go by, we may very probably find that the extensive list of birds noted at the end of Miss Watt's book will be added to, doubtful records be confirmed, rare species become better known, and the knowledge obtained by a perusal of this book more extensive.

It is very difficult, when dealing with the birds which nest upon the Farnes, to decide which species, if any, should be given most prominence; and Miss Watt wisely decides to deal with them all impartially, making no enemies (not even the aromatic cormorant), and honouring none with her special favour!

It is in this section that the many lovely illustrations add much enjoyment to the book. In her introduction the author states that most of the photographs were taken by Russell Goddard, but that some are her own, and I am sure it would take a very expert eye to decide the ownership, for all are charming.

There is no doubt that people's tastes differ to a considerable extent, and this is particularly true in regard to birds. One person will stress the imposing grandeur of the Solan's dive, another the brilliance of a drake eider in full plumage, while a third is fascinated by the airy grace of the common and Arctic tern, and yet another praises the daintiness of the ringed plover. The Farnes have all of these birds, and many more. In the book the reader is given full and detailed information about each bird, including present and past status, breeding habits, whether increasing or decreasing, and—probably of greater interest to most readers—many most appealing sidelights into the behaviour of individuals.

Turning once more to the illustrations, who could look, unmoved, at the charming scene opposite p. 81, of an eider duck escorting her four babies to the sea? Where could anyone see a more lovely spectacle than the mass of white campion on Brownsman, facing p. 33? Or who, looking at the baby seal, facing p. 176, would not feel an urge to creep up and gently stroke so charming a creature?

I heartily recommend Miss Watt's book to all Nature lovers, I feel it will make the Farne Islands more widely known, and that those who read it, however often they may have visited these Isles, will find something new in its pages.

J. M. CRASTER.

3.—*British Pistols and Guns, 1640-1840*, by Ian Glendenning. Cassell & Co. Ltd., London, 1951. Oblong quarto, pp. i-viii—1-195. 27s. 6d.

This finely printed and well illustrated book, by our member Mr. Ian Glendenning, is upon an unusual and little known subject, it is also the more valuable because it describes and illustrates examples from the author's own collection. Each specimen is depicted in half-tone upon a full page, which is well fitted to give a clear representation of the long, narrow shape of these weapons. Their ornaments are shown in greater detail below each. These include the *sideplate, escucheon, butt-mark and finial*, names which are explained in a glossary of terms so that these and other similar technical names can easily be understood. The book begins with a short general history of firearms, it then discusses, in more detail, gun barrels and their interiors, the methods of loading and firing muzzle-loading guns, much of which is new as little had previously been written upon that aspect of firearm history.

Plate 1 shows a collection of powder flasks with notes upon their uses and peculiarities. Plates 2-21 illustrate examples of pistols dating from the flint-lock holster of the seventeenth century to the percussion back action one of the mid-nineteenth. Opposite each plate is a full description with details of its decoration and construction, followed by general notes upon the pistol illustrated.

Plates 22-34 depict muskets and guns described also in the same careful way. The series begins with a dog-lock musket of the early seventeenth century, followed by examples of flint-lock fowling pieces, a blunderbuss, whose construction is described in detail, breech loading flint-locks, and finally a percussion repeating rifle, with a double barrel, of the mid-nineteenth century.

The book ends with more explanatory notes and a list, in alphabetical order, of some hundreds of names of the makers of firearms in Great Britain from 1640-1840.

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The format and arrangement of the book is excellent and the series of 34 plates greatly help the understanding of the sometimes intricate details described in the text.

The book fills a gap in our knowledge of these weapons, it is clearly written, and, one thinks, with enthusiasm for the subject by one who has made it a lifelong study. Both author and publisher are to be congratulated upon the production of such a fine book at so modest a price.

C.H.H.B.

4.—*English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, by Francis Wormald, 83 pp., 40 pls. Faber & Faber, London, 1952. 30s.

This book is similar in its design to Ronald Jessup's *Anglo-Saxon Jewellery*, which was published by the same house a year ago. Each of the two consists of an introductory survey, a detailed catalogue of the material and a large number of excellent plates. Much widely scattered material, which is not always easy of access even to those who know where to find it, has thus been made readily available in a form which deserves the attention both of the scholar and of the general reader. The books themselves are a delight to the eye, and the house of Faber & Faber is to be congratulated as well for its enterprise as for its standards of book production.

Professor Wormald, who holds the chair of palæography in the university of London, has established himself as a leading authority on the art of MS. illumination in the later Anglo-Saxon period. In this book he has confined himself rigidly to line drawings, that is to drawings in which the outline is the main vehicle for expressing the form and not merely the demarcation between the form and the space in which it stands. He has deliberately excluded paintings with full body colour, such as those in the famous Benedic-

tional of Æthelwold. The revival of Benedictine monasticism in England in the second half of the tenth century led to the rapid multiplication of books, and in these books English artists found an outlet for remarkable talents which enabled them to exploit to the full a technique which had not previously been used for MS. illumination in England. Although many of the illustrations were traditional to the works to which they belonged—and it should be noted that for this reason they are not necessarily an accurate reflection of contemporary English life—comparison of the drawings in the Utrecht Psalter with the copy of it which was made at Canterbury *c.* 1000 show how very far were the English artists of the time from being mere copyists. These tenth and eleventh century drawings have an importance which extends far beyond their own period, because they mark the beginnings of a form of art which is peculiarly English and which directly inspired English artists of much later times. In particular the debt of William Blake to such drawings as "The Spirit Brooding on the Waters" from the Caedmon MS. in the Bodleian, or the "Praying Figures" from the Harleian Psalter in the British Museum, is strikingly evident.

The Benedictine revival of the tenth century did not extend northwards beyond the southern midlands, and Northumbria, which had produced so many great works of art in the seventh and eighth centuries, had no share in this later development of line drawing which was almost wholly southern English. Professor Wormald catalogues fifty-nine MSS. which contain drawings of this kind, and of those which can be attributed with confidence to particular monasteries, some twelve belong to the two Canterbury houses, Christchurch and St. Augustine's. There is also a small group from Winchester, and others come from Exeter, Worcester, Winchester, Glastonbury, Sherborne and Bury St. Edmunds. Some thirty of these MSS. are now housed in the British Museum or the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Only one has found its way to the north. It is an eleventh-century hymnal bound together with a copy

of Ælfric's Grammar. Made originally at Christchurch, Canterbury, it is now in Durham cathedral library. Most educated people are aware that England was twice conquered by external invaders in the eleventh century, first by Cnut the Dane and then by William the Norman. They will be surprised and enchanted by the gaiety and scintillating liveliness of the work which English artists were producing in a time which has often been regarded as one of national degeneracy.

PETER HUNTER BLAIR.