

The Survey of English Place-Names.

THE attention of the Thoroton Society and other similar bodies is at present being directed to the interesting work which has been begun by the English Place-Name Survey. This enterprise has the encouragement and assistance of the British Academy, and is a definitely co-operative effort. The work has already made great progress with regard to many of the counties of England, including Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Rutland. The general director of the Survey is Professor Allen Mawer, of the University of Liverpool, and he is assisted by county and area organizers of the work of collecting material. In the spring of 1923 the English Place-Name Society was founded to further the investigation and to publish the results in volumes for the separate counties as soon as sufficient evidence has been accumulated. An introductory volume is to be published shortly under the title "An Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names." The work will contain chapters by Professors Ekwall, Sedgefield, Stenton, Zachrisson and Wyld, while Mr. J. H. Round and Mr. O. G. S. Crawford will deal with the Feudal and the Archæological aspects of the Survey. Part II of this volume will be issued separately and will contain a study of the chief elements used in English Place-Names. The volume to be issued in 1925 will probably deal with Buckinghamshire. This will be followed by Lincolnshire (two volumes) Surrey and Essex. The other counties will be issued as the work proceeds. In addition there will be a volume devoted to English River-Names.

During the last twenty years much good work has been done in place-name study, by individual scholars, skilled in one or other of its aspects, working single-handed, and in a more or less isolated fashion, but there has also been a gradual awakening to the fact that all was not well with Place-Name study. Especially has it been felt that co-operation was needed, and that in more than one direction. Above all it was seen to be necessary in the matter of the collection of material, for it had become increasingly evident that the place-names of any single area in England could not be interpreted aright except in the light of the comparative evidence for the whole of England at least. It is patent to all that the collection of such a mass of material is beyond the compass of any individual scholar, however great his industry and means. Then, further, the problems involved in the interpretation of the names collected are so complex and many-sided that it is clearly impossible for any single scholar to solve them.

The Place-Name Survey has as its first object to make available the services of a band of scholars who are experts in the various subjects called for by the needs of the investigation. These expert workers examine and compare the results obtained from a minute examination of the Place-Names of each county. This work involves the production of a mass of material by historians, philologists and topographers. Helpers such as these it is hoped may be found among the members of such bodies as the Thoroton Society and other associations of those interested in historical and antiquarian studies.

Organizers have already been found for the work in very many of the English counties and the work is far advanced in Berkshire, Essex, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Sussex, Rutland, Derbyshire and Nottingham-

shire. In Derbyshire the survey has progressed with great speed under the energetic direction of Mr. F. Williamson, the Curator of the Museum and Art Gallery at Derby. In the counties of Nottingham, Leicester and Rutland, the organizer of the work is Professor L. V. D. Owen of University College, Nottingham. With regard to the last three counties an index of all the names on the new One-inch Ordnance Survey Map of England is very near completion, besides a large collection of material from documentary sources.

The Survey is a work similar in method to the great Oxford English Dictionary, and will undoubtedly take many years to complete. To expedite the work it requires a legion of helpers who are prepared to do steady and continuous research and painful copying in libraries and collections of archives. By this long and detailed study alone will it be possible for us to see unfolded the wonderful history which is at present hidden in the Place-Names of England. Nottinghamshire, it may be remarked, has already received some individual treatment in the book on its Place-Names, published by Dr. Heinrich Mutschmann, at one time Lecturer in German at University College, Nottingham. It is hoped that as a result of the new inquiry some additions, and possibly corrections, may be made in the volume of the Survey which is devoted to Nottinghamshire. In this way the useful work of Dr. Mutschmann will be developed, extended, and in parts amended.

With regard to Nottinghamshire it may be asserted without fear of contradiction, that in the rich variety of its Place-Names, it offers an almost inexhaustible field for research. It is the meeting-ground of the Celt, the Saxon and the Norseman. No county represents in miniature the history of England better than Notting-

hamshire. It well deserves that all the available material should be collected and placed under the scrutiny of the philologists and historians who are in the service of the English Place-Name Survey. This should be a spur to local effort and it should always be borne in mind that all work done by helpers and contributors will be explicitly and individually acknowledged in each of the volumes published for the Survey.

NOTE.—Professor L. V. D. Owen of University College, Nottingham, will gladly provide all necessary information to any members of the Thoroton Society or their friends who desire to give their assistance to the Survey or to become members of the Place-Name Society.

