

Book Notices

The Archæological News-Letter. (273 Grays Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
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THIS is a new monthly publication which aims by reports and notices of meetings, reviews of books and periodicals, and articles and notes of general and specialized interest to bring current affairs in archæology within a convenient compass. The first three numbers have been concerned with prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon archæology in Britain; but future issues will cater in addition for the medievalist. In the first numbers, the outstanding articles have been by Professor Stuart Piggott, who deals from his own point of view with Archæology and the Amateur, by Dr. Glyn Daniel on Archæology and Broadcasting, and by Mr. R. J. C. Atkinson, author of the book noticed below, on Excavating and the Amateur. There is an extremely interesting and valuable article by Mr. W. Watson dealing with the Lathe in Prehistoric Britain, and the British Museum is further represented by Mr. Bruce-Mitford's study of the Swedish influence in the finds from the Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial, and by Mr. Brailsford's discussion of the workmanship of the Mildenhall silver treasure. A reproduction of the very striking poster issued by the Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society for display in schools, public offices and contractors' works as part of their campaign to enlist public support in dealing with archæological discoveries is of particular interest to those of us who have attempted the same task, and a review of the eighty-five years' work of the Yorkshire Archæological Society provides a fitting enough commentary on the value of the amateur to archæology. The resident book-critic is Mrs. Jacquetta Hawkes: there could be none better.

If the present standard is maintained, and the scope of the Notes and News is widened, for this feature alone could be of the greatest possible appeal to readers, the News-Letter can be assured of the marked success which has attended similar publications in other spheres.

R.F.J.

Field Archæology. By R. J. C. Atkinson. 7½ x 4½, pp. i-x, 238, with 8 plates and 87 diagrams in text. London: Methuen, 1946, 12s. 6d.

This is not the place for a long review of Mr. Atkinson's book. It has already received adequate notice from the standard archæological journals, and a deservedly warm welcome from archæologists in general. It is, so far as we know, the only adequate introduction to the technique of excavation, and as the Author has undertaken most of his own work

in the south of England, his remarks will in the main be acceptable to readers in Kent.

The book is divided into four parts which cover the search for archaeological evidence, its record, its interpretation and its publication, and in each section there is set out detailed information about the principles and practice of what has come to be called "History in the Open Air." To the beginner in archaeological study, to the amateur who wishes to acquire a theoretical knowledge of excavation procedures, and especially to our Members who want a reasoned guide to "Digging for History," it can be well recommended.

R.F.J.

Good Books.

A quarterly bulletin edited by Mr. Frank Higenbottam, the City Librarian, is sent out free of charge by the Public Library Committee of Canterbury to assist readers in the selection of their books and to show what other people are reading. The first issue was in the summer of 1947 and others have since followed regularly. The substantial size of the booklet and the quality of its half-tone illustrations are made possible, in part at least, by the support of advertisers. There is, as we should expect, much emphasis on the story of Canterbury. Our Member Mr. William Urry writes entertainingly on material which he has abstracted from the City and Cathedral archives, and Mr. F. Jenkins, also a Member of the Society, deals in a popular way with some of the many treasures of the Royal Museum. It is not intended that this shall be a learned work, but we welcome the way in which it deals with our own interests, the book lists on various aspects of archæology which it provides, and commend its example to other Local Authorities.

The Plantagenets 1150-1485. By John Harvey. Med. 8vo, pp. 180, with 74 plates. London: Batsford, 1948, 18s.

IN his earlier books Mr. Harvey drew back still further the veil of anonymity which for so long shrouded the masters and craftsmen of English medieval art. He has now turned his attention to those who, in right of office, were its patrons and promoters, the thirteen Plantagenet Kings of England, themselves in some cases artists, musicians, poets. The book is essentially one of portraiture, whether by pen, brush or graving tool. It aims at making live men, by description and by illustration, of those princely shadows who for some three centuries sat upon the throne. The author has chosen his moment appositely. As he says in the preface which holds the clue to the genesis of his book, "kingship to-day is at a discount . . . an institution of immemorial age and immense sanctity has been,"—with a few notable exceptions—"discarded unceremoniously." Does there lie

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before mankind, he asks—and who does not echo his question—a dark age of chaos, or an epoch of creative energy which must needs find its cultural leaders in republican circles? Mr. Harvey makes no secret of his belief in the significance of kingship in the past for cultural advancement. The house of Anjou—for the surname Plantagenet, originally the nickname of Henry II's father, with his badge of flowering broom, was only adopted by the father of Edward IV—the Angevin kings of England were distinguished by great natural powers, physical energy, impressive appearance which, with violent temper and its offset in warmhearted generosity, persisted from one generation to the next. They shared the conviction that it was "in virtue of his consecration the king reigned"; his rights could not be surrendered; "they were less rights than a bounden religious duty." The solemn act of consecration, even of a usurper, must be of divine destiny, never to be set aside. Through the centuries of their rule, a flame of artistic inspiration, unsurpassed in our history, burned on, culminating in the reign of Richard II; dying down but never extinguished, till, as though to symbolize an epoch at its close, the gold coronet of the last Plantagenet king was hacked from his helmet on Bosworth Field and fell earthwards into a hawthorn bush. Mr. Harvey has in each reign skilfully filled in the outline of historic fact with incidents, drawn from manuscript sources, chronicler and letter writer. Sometimes these are humorous; sometimes pathetic; sometimes the gestures of admiring affection or kindly tolerance; usually they bear unmistakably the stamp of genuine observation, even of close personal relationship. How, for example, Cœur-de-Lion conducted the choristers in his own chapel or worked as a stone-mason at the rebuilding of Ascalon and carried parts of a catapult like a packhorse across the desert sands. The charming word-painting, too which commended Queen Philippa to her intended bridegroom—"she is brown of skin all over and much like her father. And the damsel will be of age of nine years on St. John's day next to come . . . She is neither too tall nor too short for such an age." Lastly—irresistible in our era of pre-fab houses—Henry V's personal dealings with the master-masons employed upon his ships-of-war, and the chief mason's comment from Calais: "Touching the stone of this cuntre . . . I dare not take upon me to sett no more thereof upon your werkes, hit freteth and fareth so foule with himself, that had I not ordained lynnessed oyle to bed hit with, hit would not have endured."—These character sketches are only a framework for the outstanding interest of Mr. Harvey's book; the reproductions of what he convincingly asserts to be likenesses of the Plantagenets themselves. He endorses Carlyle's words about the primary importance of a good, even an indifferent portrait to the historian; it is "a small lighted candle by which the biographies could for the first time be read." Until some twenty years

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ago it was assumed that, in Northern Europe, before the beginning of the sixteenth century no serious attempt at portraiture had ever been made, and it was usual "to regard effigies of stone, marble or bronze, and figures in stained glass, or in the margins of manuscripts, as being no more than lay figures, accoutred in the dress of their time and bearing the coat armour of their house." Professor Lethaby was the first to challenge this unreasonable assumption. Mr. Harvey is convinced that the era of royal portraiture may be set back at least to the middle of the fourteenth century—and the estimate is a cautious one, for there are effigies at Fontevrault, reproduced here from Stothard's drawings, by French artists, of Henry II and Richard Cœur-de-Lion which "may be genuine portraits if not entirely adequate." For this earliest period material is scanty and still awaits closer study. But examples remaining from the thirteenth century, royal heads carved on monuments and sedilia, or flanking the chancel or western arch in many a village church, are often so similar that Mr. Harvey questions whether a king when on progress may have sat for his portrait, or a standard likeness, for reproduction in such surroundings, have been available. The later reigns provide ample material from such sources as Lethaby hinted at. The glorious royal effigies from Westminster Abbey were recently exhibited to admiring crowds.

Canterbury possesses the helmeted head of the Black Prince from his splendid tomb, and the rather unflattering roof-boss portrayal of the lovely Joan of Kent, from the Prince's Chantry. The features in alabaster of Henry IV and his queen, Joan of Navarre, which Mr. Harvey attributes to Stephen Lote, are here reproduced, and the pictures in stained glass of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville from the great north window in the Martyrdom. It would be of interest to have the author's estimate as likenesses of the four Plantagenet monarchs on the Cathedral pulpitum, who were so nearly contemporary with its erection. Henry IV is unmistakable; Henry V recognizable on comparison with the picture of his "keen hatchet face" in the National Portrait Gallery; Henry VI, erected by a great lover of the saintly king—Prior Goldstone—is unfortunately damaged but seems to keep something of the wistful expression of his other portraits; Richard II must have been modelled from the round childish face of his infancy. Mr. Harvey's is the book of an enthusiast, a laborious book, crowded with detail, excitingly suggestive. It will send many a reader on quest to their neighbouring churches, to examine this and that crowned or queenly head, to wonder and to compare. Indeed a recent visit to Boughton Aluph with the book in hand has afforded proof enough that the king and queen of the East window are Edward III and Philippa.

DOROTHY GARDINER.