

REVIEWS.

PLANT LIFE ON EAST ANGLIAN HEATHS. By E. Pickworth Farrow.
Published by the Cambridge University Press. Price 7s. 6d.

This title hardly does justice to the book as it is far more comprehensive than a Botanical survey. Archæology enters largely into its composition. The first plan is a map of E. Anglia showing our ancient Inland Sea as it was in pre-historic days, with a stretch of open water extending from what is now Brandon across to Peterborough. This sea is dealt with as a contributory factor towards the formation of the Breckland, or E. Anglian Heaths, of which the Author treats.

Very interesting explanations are given of Sand blasts and those moving sands which formerly caused so much damage by blocking rivers and burying houses and property, and how a constant battle is ever being fought between the Revolutionist Sand and the Pacificist Plant-life. The latter acting like oil on troubled water.

The chief delight of our Breckland lies in its variety. Its surface revels in contrasts, it is to one thing constant never. A patch of Brake, a stretch of sand, an oasis of green, a purple sea of Calluna and Heather, then more sand pierced with Carex. Trees are not wanting. They are visitors. Giants in Lilliput land.

This charming variety is noted and explained, being attributed to biotic influences, mainly rabbits, whose ferocious tendencies are unmasked.

The Author has been engaged for many years experimenting on the various forms of plant life and the influences that occasion this erratic inconstant growth. Rabbits first eat off their favourite food plants until the supply is exhausted, then perforce they must turn to less palatable pabulum, finally they must starve or migrate. Each change of diet leaves the ground fallow for possibly another kind of plant, the tendency being for the less succulent to predominate. Ling they love, Carex, no and yes, Brake and Erica tetralix, no, or with a very wry face.

Other experiments with fencing, watering and manuring are described together with such explanations as the methods by which certain plants buried under sand manage to survive.

The whole book centres round Plant life on the Breckland and a possibly exhaustive list of plants is to be found in its pages, all pleasantly introduced with sufficient explanation of their habitat.

This book provides the adagial "long felt want" of the Heath lover, be he botanist, archæologist, or just "man in the street."

Cavenham Heath in Suffolk is the locale of the work, the Breckland the general.

The above is but a glimpse at a few of the fascinating topics which are dwelt upon and illustrated by 23 Plates containing 46 photographs.

The explanation which is given of such an important word as the Breckland is hardly satisfying. In a footnote the Author states that the Breck is "So called because in the past, after the passing of enclosure acts, portions of ancient common were ploughed or broken up and were termed 'brecks' (breck—broken)."

Is it not very much earlier? Portions of it at least having been broken up and cultivated by the Celts and then allowed to lapse and run wild. The Anglo-Saxons found this land had been broken up and therefore called it Break land. Not however in a good sense, but in a bad. Because the result of breaking anything usually destroys it and renders it useless, valueless and bad. In their estimation it was broken and as useless as a broken pot. Broken things because they were useless were therefore bad and the word Breck or Brake conveyed the meaning of worthless and noxious. Brackish water was useless to drink, and stagnant water was also called brackish because it was bad water. Bracken was the product of worthless soil. A Brake was useless jungle. A Brach hound was used for hunting in the rough country. To Brake or vomit was caused by eating something bad or perhaps analogous to the Latin *ilia rumpantur*.

Varieties of this word Breck are as plentiful as they are confusing and as wide in application as they are different in meaning. Michael Drayton sings of Suffolk, as—

"Suffolk a sunne half risen from the brack."

H.A.H.

THE MANOR OF FRECKENHAM. An ancient Corner of East Anglia. By Ernest Callard. With Appendix of Early Documents and nine Illustrations. Published by John Lane, The Bodley Head, in 1924. Price 15s.

This book, written by a Life Member of our Society, and issued under the auspices of the Bodley Head, assures it of a welcome both as an embellishment to our shelves and a useful addition to Suffolk literature. It is a handsome volume, well illustrated and indexed, and contains 262 pages of local matter.

Freckenham lies on the border of that mysterious inland Sea, so often overlooked by historians when dealing with the otherwise

puzzling problems of Suffolk's commercial prosperity, high intelligence and culture. A contributing cause was this sea, a waterway that kept her in touch with the outer world. The common conception of this Sea is to picture a sea of sedge and swamp of marsh and reeds and nothing more. This was the transition stage.

Before the alluvium of the present Fen was deposited our sea was a tidal salt water continuation of the Wash, extending some little way south of Mildenhall and as large as the whole county of Suffolk. Archæologists who overlook this sea are puzzled by roads that vanish into nothingness, inaccessible settlements and objectless fortifications. The sea is the key.

Mr. Callard divides his book into chromographs instead of the conventional chapters. A happy suggestion that the book is not a many headed hydra but is given body in the form of word painting.

Under these various chromographs he traces the history of Freckenham, in progressive stages, from before the dawn to modern days, colouring his pen with the tints and tones of bygone days. A colour-scheme that makes the dry bones live.

The Author's empirical suggestion that Freckenham Parish bounds touch the Icknield Way is allowable, as parts of this Way are still sub judice, there being many fragments of supposed Roman roads that do not seem to fit any accepted route.

Even the Romans could not run a road across our inland sea, and it seems possible that in order to cross it, they made or re-made a branch road off their main track, leading to quays at places such as Freckenham, which lay on the edge of the sea, linking them by ferry with corresponding quays on the opposite shore, convenient for other main roads such as Ermine Street.

As the Fen dried later hands would lengthen these roads across the Fen, leaving us to puzzle over a piece of Roman road without beginning and without end.

The Romans were assiduous in drainage work and during the 400 years of their occupation the whole face of our county must have been altered, and as land took the place of water the roads could be shortened and were re-shaped. The Romans themselves would find their early road plans disorganized and in need of re-modelling. Having planned out a lie of land and begun to build a road they would later find it advantageous to abandon it for a better route revealed by the subsiding water. Our Suffolk Roman roads offer much to perplex the dogmatic adherent to the proverbial Roman road.

Other chromographs carry Freckenham history through the dynasties that succeeded the Roman rule, giving Parish events gathered from ancient documents, involving extensive research.

The dedication of the book is singularly pathetic. The Author lost three sons through the war, who had worked with him in compiling notes and material for this book.

The crude material was ready but needed amplification, unifying and revision. Bereaved of their assistance he felt impelled to complete their mutual work and to issue the book as an *In Memoriam*.

Unfortunately, owing to serious eye trouble, he could only superintend the work of revising MSS. and correcting proofs, and had to rely upon an amanuensis for detecting inaccuracies and slips.

To follow the trend of another man's ideas is difficult and as a natural consequence certain oversights and errors appear, but too obvious to mislead or too trivial to detract from the general interest and value of the book.

Suffolk lost so many of her sons in the war that she will understand and appreciate the aspiration of the Author to complete this work which was begun in happier hours.

H.A.H.

THROUGH EAST ANGLIA. By Gordon Home. Published by Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons. Price 2s. 6d.

This is a handy and compact little volume, which while describing visits that have been paid is evidently designed to be carried as a companion and guide by tourists.

To facilitate reference a railway map has been fixed within the cover, marked off in sections, each section corresponding with a chapter in the book. It is an ingenious idea but as most of our visitors come by car a road map might have been more useful.

The book is well illustrated with 16 half-tone plates as well as numerous sketches by the Author. It contains some 180 pages and a useful index.

The opening sentence of the book runs "That portion of England which lies between the estuary of the Thames and the Wash, commonly known as East Anglia," The Author may be correct as to "commonly known as E. Anglia," but Essex or East Saxons cannot also be East Anglians, and the Stour is the boundary line.

Suffolk is rather touchy on two points—her boundary and her epithet of Silly Suffolk. The Author having ruffled her on the former soothes her on the latter. For he states that foolish folk proclaimed their ignorance by mistaking the old English word "sele" for silly and hence "Silly Suffolk" became a proverb based on an error.

The Author means us well, but every Suffolk man knows that the two words are the same, but that time has changed both the meaning and the spelling. What we are uneasy about is whether the

epithet was applied when the word meant propitious or later when it meant foolish. Was it applied as when used of Our Lord, the silly Child Jesus, or of the Dead as Silly Souls or as Silly Sheep, or, and here lies the sting, later as Silly Ass. It goes without saying that the last is impossible.

Small books have their limitations and must cut their contents, according to their covers or we would wish space had been found to give reasons for the assertion that Cardinal Wolsey was born in 1471 and was not the son of a butcher, but in the 40 pages devoted to Suffolk the writer performs wonderful feats of condensation. It is the book for a rambler, nothing tedious nor critical, just snapshots which those who wish can enlarge. A really useful book, as Suffolk has nothing of the sort, nothing that one can slip in the pocket containing interesting information on every district in Suffolk.

The 90 pages dealing with Essex and the 40 with Norfolk have not been touched upon, being outside our Suffolk Society.

H.A.H.

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