

REVIEW.

A HISTORY OF CLARE, SUFFOLK.

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Bacon's remark that "Books must follow sciences not sciences books," is exemplified in this History of Clare, for it is a remarkably up-to-date production.

Within the last few years archæology has raised itself in public estimation from toleration as a pastime for the simple-minded, to recognition as a popular study, educational and scientific.

Most of its extant literature is looked at askance, even late Victorian publications are regarded questioningly, and more reason and research demanded, providing facts rather than fairy tales, meat not milk.

It is not that archæology is more read to-day than yesterday nor that a different class of readers have taken up the study.

Curiously the reverse is the case, for a bare century ago, a man's reading and education was mainly archæology—his library was the Bible, his education the Classics.

His archæological acumen was, however, dormant, passages that were archaic or strange were accepted as belonging to the childhood of the world and the vagaries of childhood were not to be taken seriously.

Speedily, almost imperceptibly, a change as complete as that of chrysalis to butterfly has affected the Archæologist and a new era in his literature is inaugurated.

In her History of Clare Miss Thornton conforms with the requirements of modern archæologists for accuracy and scientific exactitude.

The book is a marvellous attestation to indefatigable labour and pains, demonstrated by the large number of sources from which her information has been acquired, for there is not a page which does not bear its addenda of foot notes, giving the origin of the incidents quoted.

These quotations and extracts are not bald statements but worked into a congruous and harmonious augment that renders reading a pleasure and makes the dry bones live.

Every one of our Public Libraries, Museums and Record Offices appears to have been raided and every private source tapped to render this History of Clare as nearly exhaustive as is humanly possible.

The book is divided into three main parts :

- (1) The development of the borough ;
- (2) Studies in the history of Town and Manor ;
- (3) The Suffolk cloth trade with special reference to Clare.

There is an excellent Introduction and a good Index. Each part is subdivided into Chapters, dealing with the Castle, Church, Gilds, Black Death, Reformation, Commonwealth, Social Life, Genealogies, etc.

There are also Lists of Bailiffs, Constables, Aletesters (including one Vicar), Vicars and Apprentices.—most useful for Suffolk genealogists.

The bibliography (undesignedly, perhaps) supplies a most useful list of Suffolk works of reference, as it enumerates some 200 sources from which extracts concerning Suffolk places, other than Clare, might possibly be culled.

The book is well printed and contains eleven illustrations and two maps.

A few of the "Cries" of Clare Market are extracted from Court Rolls—One broune black horse with a walle eye on the oft side and the other eye is in his head but he is almost blind of both eyes—a deepe red bull with a curle forehead—a warming pan (1694), a gilded bible, an iron door—a dozen and a halfe of slivered bonnets.

Slivered bonnets are explained in a foot note as, " ? thread." Not long ago Suffolk peasants of both sexes wore bonnets with flaps over the ears, which were often made of leather, and as shoemakers thinned their ox hides and cut them into slivers, would not these be leather bonnets ? i.e., thin leather.

The origin of the place-name Clare is left unsolved, but surely this monosyllable denotes for its inception a Settler. The name was known in England as early as the day of St. Clair (associated with Rochester in Kent) centuries before the Norman Conquest and logically Clare would be an earlier name than St. Clair or Sinclare. Even earlier than the St. Clair of Rochester there was a St. Clare, first Bishop of Nantes, to whom some churches were dedicated in Britain as well as Brittany. He lived about 300 A.D. There was also a St. Clare in the fourth century, a pupil of St. Martin of Tours, not formally canonized, but mentioned in some ancient martyrologies. A diminutive of the name is found mentioned

in Clarethall Manor and this recalls the tradition that Claret was so called from the wine made in the Clare vineyards.

There may be truth in this, considering that we no longer make wine and employ the word vaguely for the wine from many French vineyards, but is the word French? Would a country Innkeeper in France understand if you ordered a bottle of Claret?

We are on firmer ground with the name Clarence for Ed. III created his son Lionel, "Duc Clarensis," on his marriage with Elizabeth de Burgh, owner of Clare.

Clare College also originated from Clare and possibly the County of that name in Ireland and the Clarenceux Herald.

The above guesses do not appear in Miss Thornton's History of Clare to tarnish its pages.

Her work is reliable and scholarly, replete with facts that disdain guesswork and gives the Reader an impression that it is the most accurate and exhaustive history of a Suffolk Parish that has hitherto been published.

H.A.H.

Copies of this book, price 15/-, are on sale at The Ancient House Bookshop, Ipswich.