

REVIEWS.

LORD FRANCIS HERVEY'S "ST. EADMUND OF EAST ANGLIA AND HIS ABBEY," and

MR. E. W. WILLIAMSON'S "LETTERS OF OSBERT OF CLARE."

Two books of exceptional value and interest from the Suffolk point of view have been published recently by the Oxford University Press.

1. The first of these has as its full title "Corpus Christi College, Oxford MS. 197. The History of King Eadmund the Martyr and of the early years of his Abbey." Edited by Lord Francis Hervey. Since his preface to Robert Reyce's "Breviary of Suffolk" in 1902, he has brought out the "Corolla Sancti Eadmundi" in 1907 and the "Pinchbeck Register" with other documents in 1925. The dainty volume now issued at 7s. 6d. completes the series of splendid tributes he has thus laid at St. Edmund's shrine.

Few would have expected to find in a Latin and Anglo-Saxon copy of the Benedictine Rule, which belonged to the Abbey more than nine hundred years ago and was probably brought from Hulme, a number of Anglo-Saxon entries relating to the inventories, ceremonies, domestic appurtenances, manuscripts and landed possessions of the Abbey from the early part to the close of the eleventh century; yet such is MS. 197. From the mine thus opened out much may be delved by historians, and much by those who are concerned with place-names. A few of the Anglo-Saxon words have baffled even so skilled a transcriber and translator as Miss Senior, but her notes help the reader to overcome most of the difficulties.

Lord Francis Hervey's excursions on Abbots Uvius (Wig), Leofstan and Baldwin, cover the period with which the entries deal, and are most useful and interesting. The other excursions, relating to St. Edmund's life and death, repeat much of what he has set forth elsewhere. As the protagonist of the view that the scene of the martyrdom must have been within easy reach of Orford, that "Suthtune" is to be identified with Sutton near Woodbridge, and that "Haglesdun" may have been Hollesley or some spot between Sutton and Hollesley, he renews in a succinct form the now familiar arguments. He undoubtedly makes out a very strong case in favour of the Wilford Hundred, but, in order to do so, he is obliged to assume that the words relating to Hoxne, "ubi idem martyr interfectus est," in the charter of 1101 to Bishop Herbert of Losinga, are an interpolation, and that there is no other possible "Suthtune." These points cannot well be discussed here.

It is a pity that the proem does not contain an account of MS. 197, apart from the entries here printed. Much labour has been devoted of recent years to an examination of the Latin texts and Anglo-Saxon versions of the Benedictine Rule, by Schmidt, Traube, Delatte, Cuthbert Butler and others, and a comparison of the texts would probably throw light on the ultimate provenance as well as on the date of the M.S. No doubt this was considered to be outside the scope of the book, but some references to other works might have been welcome.

On page lviii of Preface to the "Corolla," Lord Francis Hervey thanked Prior Mackinlay for the use of the block of a conjectural restoration of the Abbey buildings, presumably by W. K. Hardy, but was unable to use it owing to a delay on the part of the Edinburgh printers. In the present volume, however, there is an excellent frontispiece showing the probable appearance of the buildings about the middle of the 15th century. The sketch, by A. Lawrence, was used previously by the late Sir Ernest Clarke.

The misprint "Roma" for "Romæ" in the quotation from Archdeacon Herman about the middle of page 49 can easily be corrected by the reader.

II. The edition of the "Letters of Osbert of Clare" (10/6) represents a fine piece of team-work. Mr. E. W. Williamson is the responsible editor, and the author of most of the notes and introductory bibliographies. In his task he has had the constant assistance of the Dean of Wells, Dr. Armitage Robinson, in itself a guarantee of good scholarship, and a sketch of Osbert's career, written some years ago when he was still Dean of Westminster, is prefixed to the volume. And the Cotton MS. used, and compared with other texts, was transcribed by Mr. J. A. Herbert, formerly of the British Museum. To those who are acquainted with the letters only in the imperfect or highly abridged texts of earlier editors, this work will come as a revelation of Osbert of Clare's many-sided activity. Whilst much of this lies outside the Suffolk sphere, the following points are of special interest to the county.

(1) As to his birth and parentage much may be gathered from the letters themselves, though Dr. Armitage Robinson does not deal with these in his introductory sketch. That he was born at Clare itself is evident from several passages in which he speaks of himself in the third person, e.g., "frater Osbertus, municipio quod Clara dicitur oriundus" (p. 39), "municipii Clarensis appellatus indigena" (p. 179), and "de castello quod Clara dicitur nativitatis duxit originem" (p. 227). There is no evidence of Leland's sixteenth century statement that Osbert was an "alumnus" of

Stoke by Clare; the monks of Clare were not transferred to Stoke by Clare till 1124, and the first letter in this collection, written from Ely, shows that he had already become connected with Westminster before that date. Among his correspondents are two of his nieces, Cecilia and Margaret, nuns of Barking, and his kinsman Adelulf (Athelwold), Prior of Nostell and Bishop of Carlisle. Osbert's forbears, he writes (p. 182) were numbered "inter ingenuos," and his surviving relatives shine "generosi inter viros illustres." There is no mention of the Earls of Clare in the letters.

(2) Osbert's writings relating to Suffolk have suffered through incorporation in other writing, and have been known under other names. The "Life and Passion of St. Ethelbert of East Anglia" is to be found partly in Richard of Cirencester and partly in Giraldus Cambrensis; and the "Miracles of St. Edmund the King" form the basis of the work printed under Abbot Samson's name in Vol. I. of Arnold's "Memorials." The bibliographical excursions elucidate these points.

(3) Osbert's frequent visits to St. Edmund's Abbey throws light on the personality of Abbot Anselm, St. Anselm's nephew; and the notes on pages 191 to 200 contain the fullest account of that Abbot to be found anywhere. As only about 24 years separate the last entry relating to Abbot Baldwin in Lord Francis Hervey's book from the election of Abbot Anselm in 1121, an interesting sequel is hereby provided.

(4) Abbot Anselm and Osbert of Clare were pioneers of the revival of the Feast of the Conception of Our Lady, to which several of the letters refer. The objections which were raised in some quarters illustrate the shortness of human memories, as the festival had been discontinued as recently as in Archbishop Lanfranc's time, and had been celebrated in England before the Conquest, as well as in the West and East of Europe. The first of the revived celebrations was held apparently at Westminster; but Abbot Anselm was undoubtedly the prime mover, and it was held at St. Edmund's Abbey before it was formally sanctioned in 1129 by the Council of London, at which Abbot Anselm and Everard, Bishop of Norwich, were present. This was more than ten years before the well-known letter of St. Bernard of Clairvaux to the Canons of Lyons.

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