

REVIEW.

THE ENGLISH CASTLE.

By HUGH BRAUN.

The above book is a desirable addition to the Library of all or any archæologist who wishes for a reliable account of castles as buildings and not as receptacles for personalities whose biographies they help to elaborate.

Castle Guides, whether in pamphlet or human form, delight to dwell upon sentimental and sensational events, coupled with barons bold and maidens fair but as far as the structural features are concerned it is but a "Castle in the air."

Archæologists are as a rule sufficiently enlightened on ecclesiastical architecture to appreciate any evidence that throws light upon structural deviations from the normal and to recognise developments occasioned by utilitarian or artistic claims which influenced the growth and evolution of Churches, as being architectural histories, written in polymorphic values.

Castles are not so much in evidence as the ubiquitous Church and therefore provide fewer opportunities for the study of belligerent architecture. Both based their efforts on the same supplies but diverged, the one pitted against spiritual powers, grew in beauty and grace, the other struggling against material assaults, developed along defensive and offensive lines.

The Author devotes his book to tracing down the ages this latter style of building but is at a loss where to lay his finger on the nucleus or germ from which the infant castle started its career.

Passing over the embryonic suggestion supplied by the log castle of the beaver, and arboreal man's early castle—a tree, and also the temple fortress erected in the early dawn of civilization when all the ills that afflict mankind were attributed to the malign attacks of evil spirits which must be kept at bay by recognised defensive properties and counter magic.

Mother Earth would protect her children and earth was gathered from hallowed regions, built up into an elevated residential area which was encircled with a trench or ring of stones, symbolic of the Sun and magic circle. A moat was more effective than a dry trench, as no evil spirit can cross water.

Quick-set hedges and trees were planted on and around this now sacred site (protected by the gods of Earth, Sun and water) in recognition and appeal to the powerful gods of the Tree cult. An appeal which is echoed to-day by those who "touch wood" for luck.

Mr. Braun takes up his story when the temple and castle parted company, each on its particular avocation. It having become apparent

that these barriers against evil spirits were also effective defence against material foes if modified and adapted with that object in view.

He does not deal with nebulous conjecture on origins but leaves that to the imagination of the reader and starts the book and the castle with an accomplished fact—the Motte and Bailey castle.

This represents the most primitive type of earthwork which was formed by digging a trench and throwing up the excavated earth on the inner side to form a mound or motte, as a defence platform for human occupation.

In Suffolk we used to call this excavated earth which was thrown up the "Holl" and from this Holl was constructed the residential Holl.

Hyper refined folk of later days changed the Holl into Hall and attempted to trace its origin to the Latin "Aula" which is just swank.

The Norman-French influence did exactly the same thing with their Motte for the Motte is the mound formed from the earth thrown up when digging the moat.

Earthwork castles had an astonishingly long innings considering the obvious advantages of stone building and in the modern acceptance of the word are not recognised as castles.

In clear and intelligible fashion a picture of the stone-castle epoch is outlined in a manner difficult to improve, as no important step in its elaborate development appears to have been overlooked. Reflecting the struggle for existence between the nut and the squirrel. The nut ever hardening and thickening its shell and the squirrel retorting by developing sharper teeth and stronger jaw.

A Play in which the gods load the dice against the defensive and favour the offensive. The squirrel masters the nut, the projectile triumphs over armour plating and applied science leaves the castle a ruin.

The book is not confined to architectural technicalities employed for defence but illustrates methods of attack, weapons used, mining operations, the mouse, rams, cats, etc., and offensive methods generally.

The book is published by B. T. Batsford, Ltd., which is a guarantee of merit in author and publication. Mr. Braun being a recognised authority in all matters connected with castle composition and design whilst the book in which his lucubrations are enshrined is attractively produced, extremely well illustrated with over six score photographs, plans, reproductions, etc., possesses a useful index and is of convenient size to carry about as a vade-mecum.

Members can obtain the book from "The Ancient House," Ipswich, price 7/6, and those who have heard Mr. Braun's lectures on Bungay castle and are aware of the arduous and valuable labours he has given to the reanimation of this venerable Suffolk fortress, may like to show their appreciation by acquiring the book as a memento.

H.A.H.

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