

REVIEWS.

IN BRECKLAND WILDS.

In 1925 Mr. W. G. Clarke, F.G.S., issued a book under above title dealing with his investigations into the organism, animate and inanimate, of the Breck district.

A district which has a fascination for naturalists owing to the versatility of its changing moods, "finds" and fauna but being off the beaten track was the happy hunting ground of local inhabitants and East Anglians but to few beyond these boundaries.

The first edition consisting of 2,000 vols., had an appreciative reception and was soon sold out and resulted in drawing the attention of readers and others to the Breck, and subsequently the steps and wheels of visitors, bent on further exploration.

Being brought into the limelight and subjected to the scrutiny of these additional eyes and brains, the Breck yielded up many more amenities and treasures as well as conceding the elucidation of certain questions connected with cause and effect.

Possibly the author would have issued another edition incorporating this added increment but his sudden death negated the possibility in one way but not in another, for Mr. R. Rainbird Clarke, B.A., has revised and remodelled the book, recasting some of the chapters and introducing much original matter, retaining at the same time the old title.

This revised edition may be characterised as "*Matre pulchra filia pulchrior*" or better *privigna pulchrior*, as the book is more of a step-daughter than the more beautiful daughter of a beautiful mother.

The scenery and subject of the book is indeed beautiful and the style and diction suits the environment, describing the Breck in all its moods and phases, its meres and heaths, its birds, flowers and trees, with a pen dipped in nature's choicest colouring.

A good index is provided, being more especially essential in a book that combines the qualities of guide book, history and novel, wherein information is diffused in *dolce far niente* style and the logic of the text may be overlooked owing to the pleasurable perusal of the context.

The index is full and comprehensive but in the entry "*Brandon Creek*," it seems that folk-memory has been embellished by the cartographer, for as a lad I used to boat and fish in this water and it was then known vocally as "*Bran*" creek.

The town of Brandon is probably Brand's dune or slope and it may be that Bran Creek is Brand's creek but more likely Brant or Burnt Creek, as it is situated adjoining Burnt Fen.

Again Deadman's land, is possibly a corruption of St. Edmund's land, a corruption not uncommon in Suffolk, when it is responsible for legendary murders and gibbets, invented later to justify the appellation.

Breck land is defined as "a tract of heathland broken up for cultivation from time to time and then allowed to revert to waste."

This definition is on a par with the well known definition of this county as "Silly" Suffolk.

The meaning of words migrates, and in early days "silly" meant propitious or holy but later it meant "foolish."

The century in which the epithet "Silly" was applied is the key to its interpretation.

In like manner soil broken by the Celts with plough or spade was known as Breck land but later the A.S. use of the word was applied to describe anything bad or useless—Brackish water was bad water, Bracken grew on waste land, a Brake was useless jungle, to brake was to vomit.

Drayton applies the word to water,
 "Suffolk a sunne half risen from the brack,
 Norfolk a Triton on a dolphin's back."

But whether plow or waste land, both meanings are united by the author in the title of the book, "In BRECK land WILDS."

In addition to the index there is a list of special Breck plants, insects and molluses as well as an inventory of books and articles touching upon the Breck and its associations. Readers will be interested in the chapter on "Traditions, Customs and Ghost Tales." Some of these are general and not peculiar to Breckland but interesting as survivals, as for instance the Hummy-dances held in Thetford on Boxing day. These are a corruption of Mummy dances and were condemned by the Synod of Thurles on account of their indecency occasioned by men and women changing garments.

The book is well printed on good paper in clear type and is published by W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., Cambridge, price 12s. 6d. It contains 19 full page illustrations and a pictorial map of the district.

H.A.H.

SUFFOLK CHURCHES AND THEIR TREASURES.

By H. MUNRO CAUTLEY, A.R.I.B.A.

This book is a comprehensive survey of all the treasures, objects of archæological interest and noteworthy features possessed by Suffolk Churches—an ingenius venture which is probably unique—unique because of the multiplicity of subjects embraced and dealt with between the covers of one book.

Books that specialise in these various subjects are plentiful and are scattered about on the shelves of all large libraries but to find the contents of a library condensed into one book is quite original, at any rate in Suffolk.

To compile a book with this protean purview requires an expert knowledge of scientific facts and also a familiarity with those technical terms which enable a writer to define in one apt word or phrase some or other architectural design, process or form, which without such a laconism would require a proposition in Euclid to convey his meaning.

Suffolk is to be congratulated on being able to number among its many celebrities one possessed of the qualifications necessary for producing a book of such outstanding value to the county.

In writing this book Mr. Cautley was evidently inspired by, and took as his text, the old adage, "Brevity is the soul of wit"—that is, of "wit" in its earlier meaning of "wisdom"—for brevity and succinctness are its inherent characteristics.

Books vary in size and prospective purchasers with limited shelf accommodation may hesitate under the impression that despite the phenomenal terseness of this encyclopedia of a book it must surely be similar to one of those massive and unwieldy folios beloved of our ancestors.

Any such vain imaginings will be allayed by learning that the size of the book is 11 by 7½ by 1½ inches.

The book commences with a brief historical epitome of the early and mediaeval church in Suffolk, followed by a consideration of the structure of church walls, the destruction of church fittings, the architectural features of towers, porches, roofs, aumbries, Easter sepulchres and other structural parts of the church fabric.

The author supplements his descriptive pen with photographs taken by himself—an accomplishment which incidentally discloses another of his versatile talents.

These photographs number over 400 and are a great asset when describing carving, misericords and artistic ornamentation, for the camera supplies optical evidence such as no mental picture drawn by the pen can convey.

If churches were uniform and their fittings unvarying the pen would suffice and it would be enough to say that a pulpit was Stuart or a font 15th Century, but as there are more exceptions than rules an illustration is necessary for effective delineation.

Photographs of "interiors" are difficult to take owing to bad light, and those individuals who have had experience of this work will appreciate the really marvellous results obtained, especially those which show us roof carvings and other well nigh inaccessible subjects which are skied or in obscure positions. In the "dim religious light" that filtered

through stained glass or was shed by sombre candle glimmer, these seemingly misplaced embellishments were never seen by man. The decorative effects were so placed to the glory of God and not for artistic effect or the admiration of man.

Those who delight in visiting churches will find in this book a digest of all that is of interest in Suffolk churches. To every one of our 505 churches is assigned a specification of its architecture, date and style, notable features and treasures in the matter of furniture and fittings, up to the end of the 18th century.

This should prove exceedingly useful to visitors, for with this book in the car they can wander where they will in the county, having with them a guide to the site and properties of every church in Suffolk, as, in addition to the illustrations and descriptions, there is a map of Suffolk showing the main and secondary roads, railways, diocesan archdeaconry and deanery boundaries and sites of churches.

The book is published by B. T. Batsford, Ltd., London, price £1 1s., and as a "Batsford book" it is superfluous to add that the print is clear, the illustrations excellent and the book in every way a desirable acquisition.

The Printers' toast of "the ladies" may fittingly be applied to this book—Woman—the edition is large and every man should possess a copy.

H.A.H.