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Reviews

The Heraldry of Canterbury Cathedral; The Great Cloister Vault.
By Commander (S) A. W. B. Messenger, F.S.A., L.R.I.B.A.,
R.N. (Retd.). *The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral*, 1947. 18s.

It is inevitable that any new work on the heraldry of the Canterbury cloister should have to face comparison with the monumental study by the late Ralph Griffin, F.S.A., in Volume 66 of *Archæologia*. Griffin was not quite a pioneer—the Elizabethan and Jacobean heralds and, later, Streatfeild, and Williment in his *Heraldic Notices*, had studied the shields and had done much useful work upon them; but it was Griffin who, by a new examination of the shields themselves and by bringing his great learning to bear upon their interpretation, produced a definitive conspectus which places every subsequent worker in his debt, and which is unlikely ever to be finally superseded.

But Griffin's work is in a great ponderous volume of *Archæologia*, long out of print and difficult to come by; and since it was published the re-colouring of the shields has been carried out at the expense of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral. The Friends have now, as it were, given an account of their stewardship by the publication of this book, containing a series of photographs by Mr. C. E. Fisher, and letterpress by Commander Messenger.

Of the photographs no praise could be too high. What a joy it is to have practically every one of the eight hundred odd shields and badges in the cloister so admirably reproduced! Without ever going to Canterbury we can, by comparing them with the reproductions of the uncoloured shields annexed to Griffin's paper, appreciate how much has been gained by the work of cleaning and colouring.

After a short list of heraldic terms and three pages of illustrations for the benefit of the unlearned, Commander Messenger gives us three things: first, an Inventory of the shields, going round the cloister bay by bay; secondly, an Armorial, or list of arms under names in alphabetical order; and thirdly an Ordinary. Those who use the Inventory to examine the shields *in situ* are much assisted by a diagram at the end of the volume showing how the numbers given to the shields in the text have been allotted. For annotations on the shields, mostly abridged from Griffin, we have to turn to the Armorial, an inconvenience which would have been avoided had the compiler followed Griffin's example and given the whole story of each shield in one place, relying on an index of names for those who wished to look up individuals' arms.

The abridgement of the annotations is the most serious fault of a

book which, as Miss Babington's Foreword tells us, aims at becoming "the standard work of reference to the heraldry of the Great Cloister." It means that, for the serious student, the book cannot stand on its own feet, but must still be used in conjunction with others; while the absence of Griffin's learned Introduction must be regretted still more by those who approach the subject for the first time than by one who, having used it for many years, knows it almost by heart.

In his blazoning the compiler is a disciple of the late Sir William St. John Hope, whose views on this subject, though worthy of the greatest respect, have not by any means secured universal acceptance. For example, *sable on a chevron or between three lions argent a molet of the first* becomes *sable a chevron gold and three lions silver with a molet sable on the chevron*. One fails to see the logic of translating the names of the metals into English whilst retaining the old French names for the colours; and in the Ordinary the new order of words will not work, and the headings have to follow the old system. Some spellings not in general use nowadays also attract attention, e.g. *annelet* for *annulet*, *burely* for *baruly* or *burruly*, and *charbocke* for *escarbuncle*.

There are one or two slips, and examples of doubtful terminology likely to lead to confusion: a *baston* or *baton* is not, in modern heraldic parlance, the same thing as a *bendlet*: it stops short at either end before reaching the edge of the shield; any herald during the past three hundred years would have drawn the pheon in Fig. 46 in the explanatory pages of illustrations (inset, p. 8) the other way up: if the compiler has found some medieval precedent for representing it as he has, this should have been stated; the arms of Taverner show not a plain cross voided but a cross voided and coupé, which gives this coat its special character.

Among the unidentified arms at p. 117 it may be suggested that *vert, three bars wavy or* has been wrongly coloured, and should be *argent, three bars wavy gules*, the coat of Campania, of Champions Court in Norton. In this connexion it is proper to add that Commander Messenger is in no way responsible for the colouring of the original shields. This work was done on information furnished by Mr. Griffin; and later heraldic research has brought to light facts which would doubtless have caused the latter to revise his identifications, and consequently the colouring of the shields, in certain cases.

A new conspectus of the cloister shields in reasonably handy form was long overdue. It may be doubted whether this volume has fully supplied the need, though it has gone a long way towards it; and a little recasting and augmentation in the next edition, when, too, a relaxation of "austerity" may permit of more attractive printing and binding, may well result in the attainment of the objective which the Friends have had before them.

Gothic England. By John Harvey. B. T. Batsford Ltd. 1947. 21/-.

MR. HARVEY gives to his book the sub-title of "A Survey of National Culture," covering the period 1300-1550. It has been criticized for showing too frequently an enthusiast's lack of balance, a readiness to jump at conclusions. This is altogether to underestimate its value both as a work of wide scholarship and of inspiring suggestiveness.

The author's promise of a "survey" is fulfilled. He views artistic effort, greater and less, on a single plane. Architecture is his prime interest; music and poetry its closest allies; but he does not fail to assess the status, during his chosen period, of the subsidiary arts which adorn his greater buildings, carving in wood and stone, painting, stained glass, embroidery, metalwork. All these he envisages in their framework of social and political conditions.

The Golden Age of English Gothic, the "distinctively National period" was reached, after ages of artistic experiment, in the fourteenth century; its focal point was the closing decade of Richard the Second's reign, last of the Plantagenet kings who as art-patrons and themselves artists, raised England to outstanding achievement. "For every great work of art" says Mr. Harvey, "we must posit a single human artist in whose imagination the form appeared before it was wrought with hands." Hitherto the cathedral lover has been apt to dwell regretfully on his ignorance of the cathedral builders, the greater craftsmen and the lesser. Mr. Harvey does his best to wipe away what he calls "the plague of anonymity" and certainly contrives ample remedy.

The artists and craftsmen (usually laymen, as the clerics were scholars and philosophers) responsible for all major developments during the years under review, are, in fact, usually known by name.

A book so embarrassingly rich in detail tempts the critic to a discussion only in general terms. It may be of interest to set out here some of the facts Mr. Harvey has chronicled from our own county records.

He fills our foreground with interesting figures other than that of Henry Yevele which we owe to his earlier book. The "Canterbury and Kent School of Masons" provided a succession of prominent architects. "Between 1290 and 1335 Masters Michael, Walter and Thomas of Canterbury were chief masons to the king, while Richard and Roger of Crundale probably derived from the same region." These "masters of the geometric tradition" we dub English Perpendicular, no doubt owed something to the nearness of their home-county to the continent. Not a few English architects are known to have visited France and Italy. Their careers however for the most part were spent in London: Michael made the plan of St. Stephen's Chapel at West-

minster for Edward II and III; the earliest use of lierne vaulting in the crypt belongs to Master Walter. He and Master Thomas, perhaps his son, were associated in the neighbouring cloister and in the new chapel at the Guildhall. The same group of Kent craftsmen designed the gatehouse of St. Augustine's Abbey, "forerunner of all the later turreted gatehouses of England"—

Our author has much to say, and has provided an enchanting picture-gallery, of the towers and spires which embody the greatest positive achievement of English Gothic. "No other features lend themselves so well to the expression of strength, endurance, majesty, aspiration, the reality of the spiritual world beyond the material and earthly."

Foremost among the towers he sets Bell Harry, though he gives the whole credit for its beauty to John Wastell, and a date for its beginning when it was nearing completion.

The earlier Canterbury masons had their successor in John Box, who was called away by Edward III to join the ranks of royal craftsmen depleted by the Black Death.

Mr. Harvey makes the interesting suggestion that Box designed the miniature vaulting of Archbishop Stratford's tomb, "a perfect example of the mason's knowledge of solid geometry"; he reminds us too, while drawing no inference, that Stratford's successor, Archbishop Bradwardine, was the most learned English geometrician of the Middle Ages.

In the south-west tower Thomas Mapilton, the King's Master Mason and Stephen Lote's successor, carried on the Yevele tradition. After Mapilton, Richard Beke took charge of the works at Christchurch and for some twenty years earned 4s. a week in wages and allowances for house, fuel and clothing which included provision against sickness like the Health Insurance of our day. Particularly interesting is the author's discussion of the origin of the tester of the Black Prince's tomb; this he inclines to attribute to Gilbert Prince, King's Painter until his death in 1396, and a leading member of the Fraternity of St. Luke. Prince painted banners for the funeral of Queen Joan of Scotland, and adorned others with the royal arms for the minstrels' trumpets.

The roll of English achievement is heartening reading in these times. It has an up-to-date touch when we learn that the medieval house was itself a "pre-fab," the frame of solid oak being made by a carpenter in his yard and transported by barge to the selected site, where the panels were filled in with wattle and clay-daubing. There was a breach of contract action in 1317 when a house was made of willow instead of oak.

The Golden Age of English art was followed by Civil War, with its trail of poverty and disillusionment, but, writes Mr. Harvey "it rose

triumphant over weakness, in its swan-song, wherein God was glorified by means of works seldom equalled and never surpassed by men's hands." Might this be true of our own day; here too the book has its message of inspiration.

D.G.

Some Illustrations of Monumental Brasses and Indents in Kent.

THIS pamphlet, issued in 1946 by the Monumental Brass Society, is a memorial to Ralph Hare Griffin, F.S.A., Secretary of the Society from 1921-29. With its biographical details and an interesting preface by Mr. R. H. D'Elboux it forms a worthy reminder of our late most valued member; and as a picture book of lost brasses and indents a record of painstaking work to scale by an early 19th C. Thomas Fisher who Griffin brought into the limelight. We are also reminded in the preface and in Plate XXXV of another old friend, the late Mill Stephenson, F.S.A., who also did so much valuable work on Kentish Brasses.

W.P.D.S.

The Kentish "Armada" of 1724.

THE Transactions of the Southend-on-Sea and District Antiquarian and Historical Society, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1947) include an interesting paper by Mr. William Pollitt, F.S.A.—"Old Southend and the Kentish 'Armada' of 1724".

The trouble between Southend and the Oyster Fisheries at Milton, Queenborough and Faversham grew up through raids by bodies of men with 100 smacks and 6 sloops from the latter places who claimed, but with some doubt on their part, that they believed that the oyster beds were on a common shore, open to anyone. Be this as it may certain men of Southend—one Outing in particular—had accidentally found about 1700 that small oysters which he could not use thrown overboard between tide marks had flourished and grown. Others following his success also profited, and fortunes were made. Whether trade rivalry or the above claim was the motive for the raid it was carried out with such forces led by the Mayor of Queenborough, that the Southend men could not resist and so in a total period of ten or eleven days thousands of bushels of oysters were gathered. A Chelmsford surveyor named Lee, who has left records, wrote that on one day when he "took measurements the raiders loaded five large sloops with oysters, which they carried with all speed to London, where they had to sell them cheaply because of the glut they had caused on the market".

In the actions, in the Assizes Records, that were brought by the Southend men those at Brentwood were heard on the 10th of March 1725 and the following days. The Plaintiffs won with damages of

£1,100 and £2,000 and costs, while a third action was heard at Westminster Hall before three judges with six counsel on each side, and with about 60 witnesses. In this case a verdict was given for the plaintiffs with £2,100 damages and costs.

Mr. Pollitt closes the episode by recording that "it was stated at the time that altogether the trespass had cost the Kentish men £7,000 or more. The whole community of Milton, Queenborough and Faversham, it was said, had each to pay their proper part, and share it as they were able, the raising of the money taking many years, at Faversham about 20. It is probable that the communities referred to were the companies, guilds or fraternities of oystermen at these places, and the records of the old Oyster Company or Fraternity of Oystermen of Faversham show that this body, in or about the year 1725, did pay out sums of money to some of its members on account of legal costs".

W.P.D.S.

Roman Britain. Sidelights of History No. 1 in Young Britain Education Series. By R. F. Jessup, F.S.A. [1947]. 1s. 6d.

THIS booklet is the first of several of a series published by the *Daily Mail* School-Aid Department. As we can expect from this author it is authoritative and also so written as to give in straight-forward language a fascinating picture of the 350 years of the Roman occupation of this island.

With the help of some dozens of copyright photographs, drawings, and plans and a map of Roman Britain lent by various authorities, those for whom it is written, and not only the young, should appreciate what we have lost in organization, architecture and art when this period came to an end with the break up of the Western Roman Empire. Your reviewer looks forward to the author's further work on the succeeding centuries of our history whether they be darkly pagan or Christian.

W.P.D.S.