Notice of Book.

"A Quantock Family: Stawell of Cothelstone," by Colonel G. D. Stawell. (Barnicott and Pearce, The Wessex Press, Taunton, 1910; 4to., pp. xxxii, 566; 42*s. net*).

This handsome, well-illustrated volume gives many details of a widely-spread and distinguished family; but we must confine our remarks to the Stawells of Cothelstone. The extravagant pedigrees of the Elizabethan Heralds carry the family back to the Conqueror; but there is contemporary evidence that in the reign of Henry I Geoffrey de Coveston (Cothelstone) was holding Cothelstone of the Bishop of Winchester, and Stawell of the Abbot of Glastonbury. Early in the XIII Century the head of the family preferred to be known by the name of his Glastonbury holding, and in a lawsuit referred to two generations of ancestors by this new name; with the result that the identity of the earlier family of Cothelstone with the later family of Stawell was completely obliterated, and has only been recovered by Colonel Stawell after much research.

The first monument in Cothelstone Church is that of Sir Matthew Stawell, who married *temp.* Ed. III, Eleanor, daughter and co-heir of Sir Richard Merton of Great Torrington. Their son, Sir Thomas, was buried at Glastonbury; and there was formerly a quaint mural monument (illustrated on p. 43) of himself and his three wives in St. Mary's Church, Taunton. His grandson, Sir Robert, was called 'the upright man,' which character brought upon him the burden of witnessing the wills of great people. His grandson, Sir John, was very active in raising forces for the defence of the kingdom at the time of the Spanish Armada; and was associated with some neighbours as well as Sir Walter Raleigh in the plantation of the forfeited lands of Munster.

The outbreak of the Civil War found another Sir John Stawell as ready to fight against the domestic enemies of the Crown as his ancestor was against the Spaniard. In his early days at Oxford he was noted for his interest in chemistry, and in 1643 was created M.D. as well as M.A. At the coronation of Charles I he was made a knight of the Bath. He was present at the first engagement in Somerset, at Marshall's Elm, near Somerton; and having failed to bring about a reconciliation before the engagement, when it was over, used "both his

power and his example to hinder further execution." Presently he moved westward with Sir Ralph Hopton, and did good service with the Cornish army. Returning into Somerset in May 1643, he was appointed governor of Taunton; an office which he held until the garrison was withdrawn by Prince Maurice in 1644. He was one of the defenders of Bridgwater in July, 1645; and of Exeter until its surrender to Fairfax, 9 April, 1646. Then he went to London to make composition for his estates; but refusing to sign the covenant, he was confined in Newgate, and in the Tower. Although he had tried to check the excesses of Goring's "crew," when he was in authority, £7,000 of his estate was assigned to Taunton "in reparation of their great losses and sufferings," during the siege; and except Cothelstone (then in ruins) and £500 a year apportioned to his wife and children, his property was confiscated. He was released in 1653, but not allowed to leave London, and being in great poverty was granted £6 a week by an order in Council. In 1660 his estates were restored in full; and in 1661 he was again chosen M.P. for Somerset; but his health was broken, and he died 21 February, 1662-3. His wife was Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Sir Edward Hext, who had built a good manor house, and an interesting Chapel at Low Ham (Netherham). In his house at Netherham Sir John Stawell died; but he was buried at Cothelstone, where a mural monument still tells of his worth; and the state funeral that did honour to so brave a gentleman, extended its procession for many miles between Langport and Taunton.

In recognition of his services in the royal cause, his son, Ralph, was created a peer in 1683, as Baron Stawell of Somerton. In 1685, Lord Stawell, copying his father's gentleness, protested against the inhumanity of Jeffries, who retaliated by ordering two rebels to be hung at the gateway of Cothelstone. There is a fine monument to the first Lord Stawell at Low Ham. The second Lord, a young man of twenty-one, so wasted the property during his three years of occupancy, that of their twenty-eight manors in Somerset and Dorset the family retained only two. He pulled down the manor house at Low Ham, and began to build a palace there which was to cost £100,000; but it was never finished. He was succeeded by his step-brothers, William and Edward, under whom the estate slowly recovered. Edward left only a daughter, Mary, who married the Right Hon. H. B. Legge, sometime Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1760, George II created her a Baroness, and her son, Henry Stawell Bilson Legge, became Baron Stawell of Somerton of the second creation. Wishing to acquire land in Hampshire, he sold the manor and estate of Cothelstone, in 1793, to Mr. Jefferies of London, who, in 1814, left it to his grandson, Mr. Jefferies Esdaile.

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