Book Review

ST. NECTAN, ST. KEYNE, AND THE CHILDREN OF BRYCHAN IN CORNWALL, by the Rev. G. H. Doble, Vicar of Wendron, Helston, Cornwall (1*s.* 6*d.*, to be obtained from the author).

This is No. 25 of the ' Cornish Saints ' series in which the indefatigable writer has investigated with great erudition the saints of his county, many of whom are honoured across the Channel in Brittany. Brychan is a Welsh Prince of the fifth century, who gives his name to Brecknock, and is famous in legend as the father of twenty-four saintly children who have left their mark to a large extent outside their native land. Our interest in this brief notice must be confined to the links which three of them are supposed to have with our own county of Somerset.

(1) St. Nectan was the eldest son, and there is no doubt that he had a chapel in or near the church at Cheddar. It must suffice here to give the following references : *Som. Rec. Soc.* xvi, 304, xlii, 173f. ; *S. and D.N. and Q.* iv, 86, x, 114.

(2) St. Kew is conjecturally identified with Wencu, and has been already discussed in No. 12 of the series ' SS. Docco and Kew '. Our special interest lies in the suggestion that here we get the clue to the name Kewstoke, where ' opposite the church door is a series of steps leading up the hill, called St. Kew's Steps, the origin of which is unknown '. Prof. Mawer, who is deservedly honoured as the founder of the English Place-Name Society, has assured our author that ' there is no reason why Kewstoke (in Domesday *Chiwestockh*, 1268 *Kyustoke*, 1273 and 1279 *Kywestok*) should not contain the name of *St. Kew*, just as in Devon there was a place now called Stoke, which was *Nechtanestok* '. This is a cautious judgement of great interest : we must wait for the Somerset volume of ' Place-Names ' to see whether there are other alternatives which demand serious consideration.

(3) St. Keyne is famous through Southey's ballad, ' The Well of St. Keyne ', which may here be read in full. A translation is also given of the mediaeval ' Life ' in the *Nova Legenda Angliae* (Horstman's ed. of Capgrave, ii, 102–4). The holy virgin is there said to have left her native country, crossed the Severn, and settled in a solitary place pestered by snakes, which she was enabled to turn into stones. The story still clings to Keynsham, where the ammonites

are quarried and carry on the tradition to-day. Have we here the true origin of the place-name, as we have generally been taught ? Mr. Doble has discussed the matter with great care. Keynsham Abbey was not founded until *c.* 1170, and the ' Life ' referred to would seem to have been composed after this date, not improbably, he thinks, by monks of Margam who themselves had special interest in St. Keyne. There is no evidence of a cult of the saint at Keynsham Abbey, nor indeed elsewhere in Somerset. Here again we are indebted to a communication from Prof. Mawer, and it appears to be decisive. He writes : ' The earliest form for *Keynsham* is *Caeginesham* (the MS. of Ethelweard . . .), I do not think it is very likely that *Keynsham* can contain a saint's name : I know of no other example of *ham* compounded with a saint's name ; nor does it seem likely that it can contain the particular saint's name in question, for as she was a woman the possessive case should not be formed with an *s* '. The force of this last remark will be clear if we recall the familiar names of our week : Woden's day and Thor's day have the *s* for the genitive ; but the lady Freya on the contrary has given us Friday !

It remains only to thank Mr. Doble not merely for this, but for the other numbers of his exceptionally stimulating series, in which he breaks new ground again and again, and makes a very important contribution to Celtic hagiology. His studies of St. Carantoc and St. Petroc will be found specially interesting to Somerset readers.

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