Notices of Books.

SOMERSET HISTORICAL ESSAYS, by J. Armitage Robinson, D.D., Dean of Wells, vii + 160, royal 8vo., British Academy, 1921; price 10*s*. 6*d*.

We are not able to offer what the Dean asks for 'criticism . . . from a wider knowledge and more practised judgment,' but we can gladly assure the members of the Society that they will find in this book several questions interesting to all who care for Somerset treated by a painstaking scholar of ability who goes to the sources of our history with keen insight, a mind trained in other fields to sound criticism and with a local patriotism disciplined by great knowledge.

Essay I breaks new ground. It is a critical examination of the early part of William of Malmesbury's *Antiquity of the Church of Glastonbury* (c. 1125). The Dean has discovered interpolations and of successive dates. William is shown to be not responsible for bringing to Glastonbury either Arthur or Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail. William accepted the local belief that the great St. Patrick after his work in Ireland lived, ruled, and was buried at Glastonbury; he refers to 'annals of good authority' which tell of missionaries in 166, and to the tradition that they built *vetusta ecclesia*; and says that it was not impossible that St. Philip the Apostle, whilst in the land of the Franks, sent disciples to Britain who came to Glastonbury; but he gives no names either for 166 or 63.

The second essay compares William of Malmesbury's list of 26 Saxon Abbots of Glastonbury with a tenth century list of 19, and shows that William's list, notwithstanding Bishop Stubbs' preference for the earlier one, is the more trustworthy for the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries. In these two essays William of Malmesbury relieved of the interpolations is claimed to be a sound historian, relying on charter evidence and using a discriminating judgment as to what had gone before the charters.

In the third essay the refounding of the Wells Chapter is given as 1140–3, and rectified dates for the first three deans: Ivo 1143–63, Richard 1164–89, Alexander 1189–1213.

The fourth essay unravels the tangle of the 'Early Somerset Archdeacons.' The volumes of the Somerset Record Society have wrought havoc in the tables of Le Neve's *Fasti*. But the custom of describing archdeacons by the name of the diocese only, or simply by their office, makes it difficult to allot them to their archdeacon-

ries. It is interesting to find the first archdeacon in the south of the diocese described as *de ultra Perret.*

V. Peter of Blois, *c.* 1135—*c.* 1212, Archdeacon of Bath 1182–1206, with his slender connection with Somerset, his amazing facility in the use of the Bible and his part in great affairs of the Church and kingdom is shown to be by reason of his Letters of considerable historical importance.

VI. In the last essay, having proved that Bishop Jocelyn did not leave the realm at the promulgation of the Interdict in 1208, nor until the king himself was excommunicated eighteen months later, the dean touches a question puzzling to many : why did good men like Bishop Jocelyn, his brother bishop of Lincoln, and Philip Daubeney stand by the wicked king ? Refusing to whitewash John, the dean holds, as is doubtless right, that they regarded John as a great Englishman and the champion of the prerogatives of the English crown: ' his cause was one which the sober judgment of Englishmen was bound to uphold.'

It will have been noticed that although these historical studies are primarily of Somerset they range farther afield, and will assist students of the history of the Church at large and of the whole realm.

J. Hamlet.

A West-Country Armory.

By the kind gift of Mrs. Spencer Perceval a manuscript of unusual interest has been added to the Society's library. The volume contains 36 pages of paper, 16¼ × 10½ins., bound in brown calf, but it gives no clue to the name of the compiler of the armory or the original owner. A note in a contemporary hand at the foot of the illuminated frontispiece states that the work was " begun ye 26 February 167⅞." The subject of the MS. is a list of the arms of families resident in the following counties, the appended numerals denoting the number of pages allotted to each county :—Devon 5, Cornwall 5, Somerset 4, Dorset 4, Somerset and Dorset 1, Wiltshire 4, Hampshire 3, Oxfordshire 3, Berkshire 2, Oxon and Berks 1. Each page when filled exhibits 51 armorial shields, underwritten with the names of those who bore the respective coats. The majority of the shields are painted in heraldic colours, the remainder being carefully drawn in ink but without any indication of the tinctures. On nine of the pages the arms thus depicted are also blazoned opposite, on the back of the preceding leaf. At the end of the volume several pages are only partially filled with arms, and one page is blank, save the ruling, which suggests that the MS. is unfinished. The aggregate number of coats exceeds thirteen hundred, but there is no index of surnames.

Henry Symonds.