

Review

THE PLEASURES OF ENGLISH COIN COLLECTING.

By JOHN SHIRLEY-FOX. The Azani Press, 2s. 6d. 83 pp. and 73 illustrations by freehand drawing.

STUDENTS and collectors of English coins have in recent years felt much concern at the dearth of young collectors at the present time. The causes of the dearth are manifold, but perhaps we are ourselves not altogether free from blame for this unsatisfactory situation. Now that the subject has become more advanced, more sophisticated and therefore less easily attractive to the beginner, now that sales are more highly organized and bargains less readily forthcoming, students and collectors may do well to consider how they may provide, by writing or by lecturing, attractive material with which to decoy the uninitiated into the deeper waters of the science.

Mr. Shirley-Fox has performed a real service to the subject in the publication of his cheap little book on the collecting of English coins. In spite of the difficulty of compressing such a wealth of material into so small a space, he has produced a book that is eminently readable, and the text is enriched by a series of his own freehand drawings which are not only attractive to the eye, but, unlike freehand illustrations of older works, extraordinarily true to their originals; the drawings are portraits of real coins, not characterless outlines. The book in fact is the happy combination of its author's qualities; the text is readable because it flows from a mind which has not only studied the subject thoroughly but enjoyed it thoroughly for many years; the illustrations are good and pleasing because the author is an artist and knows and loves the subjects on which he works.

We may hope that Dr. Norwood's foreword will persuade schools to bring the book to the notice of schoolboys; it is

primarily for them that the book is written and for them it is admirably suited. The pleasures that may be derived from this form of collection are well described in the introduction; the occasional humour and whimsicalities of the subject are not lost sight of; the points of historical and artistic interest—the latter too often overlooked in the English series—are sufficiently indicated without ever drifting into the dullness of the pedagogue. In spite of his expert knowledge the author refuses to allow himself to be drawn into dull technical or controversial matter. From the outset interest in the subject is the note which Mr. Shirley-Fox is determined to sound, and indeed throughout the book this object is harmoniously maintained.

The book gives much at a very small price; it covers the whole history of English coins from Ancient British to present currency. If his enterprise is successful in bringing recruits to the study of English coins we shall have reason to add our gratitude to our good wishes.

G.C.B.