

stone of apparently the same date. The oak overmantels in the drawing-room, which I highly value, were collected and placed there by the same hand. One of them bears two inscriptions in Welsh which have been translated to me as "John the son of John the charming faced," and the motto "The truth above the world."

A PROBLEM FOR SOLUTION.

It only remains for me to thank you for your presence here, for joining me in visiting scenes many of which are no doubt familiar to you, but which can never pall on any true lover of rural beauty. I am proud to be living in the house where Tom Hughes spent his childhood, and to have become by adoption a Berkshire-man. I am trying so far as I can to collect and familiarise myself with the past history of this house and its surroundings, and I should be grateful for any light upon it which any of you may be able to supply. Perhaps also some of you may be able to throw light upon a problem in which I am interesten as a fisherman and a naturalist, the utter disappearance of the cray fish from the Lambourne which runs under my window. The Memoirs of Sir Alexander Arbuthnot from which I have already quoted, records how in 1837 he went with Tom Hughes "to the rivet Lambourne which flows through the Priory garden, and we amused ourselves by scooping crayfish out of the river with our hands. We caught a quantity in that way." I do not know why the crayfish have now entirely disappeared. I have made an attempt to re-introduce them by putting in about a hundred live ones last year, but so far I have not been able to trace any satisfactory results of the experiment.

Waylen Smith's Caba.

By W. H. Belcher.

THIS is a cromlech, and was formed by the ancient dwellers upon the hills, most probably to contain the remains of a chief. It is built of sarsden stones, and the earth, which at one time covered it, has been removed. Several thousand years may have passed since this monument was raised, and it has, for ages,

been an object of interest to antiquaries and others, and the legends connected with it will certainly cause that interest to be maintained. It is mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon charter nearly 1,000 years ago. In the year A.D. 955, King Eadred granted 8 hides of land at Cumtune noar the hill called *Æcesdune*, and one of the boundaries mentioned is "The Ridgeway," and another, "along the furrow until it comes to the wide gate by the east of 'Weyland's Smithy.'" It was therefore a well-known landmark to the Saxons.

THE MYTHICAL SMITH.

Weland was the mythic smith in their mythology, and, according to the Eddas, was entrusted when a child by his father Wade, the elf or demi-god, to the dwarfs in the interior of the mountains who lived among the metals, that they might instruct him in their wonderful skill in forging, and in making weapons and jewellery, so that under their teaching the youth became a wonderful smith. Probably the Saxons brought this legend with them when they settled in these parts of the country. and in the course of time the legend varied and found a local application in different countries. The popular story among the inhabitants of the Vale connected with this cromlech, is that if a traveller passing this way lost one of his horse's shoes he had only to take the animal to the cave which was supposed to have been inhabited by an invisible smith, and deposit a groat on the copestone. He was then to withdraw to some place where he could not see the operation, and on his returning after a short space of time, it was held that he would find his horse properly shod and the money taken away. A somewhat similar legend is connected with Hephaistos in Greek mythology, who is supposed to have specially haunted the Vulcanian Islands near Sicily. "It was formerly said that whoever chose to carry there a piece of unwrought iron, and at the same time, deposit the value of the labour, would on presenting himself there on the following morning find it made into a sword or whatever object he desired." Another story about this monument is, that Bagseeg the Dane, who (according to Asser, the Bishop of Sherborne and a friend of Alfred the Great) was killed at *Æcesdune*, was buried here.

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S "KENILWORTH."

Sir Waltar Scott was informed of these legends by Mrs. Hughes, the grandmother of "Tom Hughes," whose husband, Canon Hughes, was Vicar of Uffington. Who has not laughed at the

brilliant description in "Kenilworth" of Tressilian trying to catch the Berkshire lad Flibertigibbet, who had told him the legend and how he could get his horse shod? He utterly failed in his pursuit, as the boy was far too active and speedy, and when quite exhausted Tressilian had to promise not to punish him. Berkshire men can hardly forgive Sir Walter for making "Wayland" into a really living blacksmith. We men of the vale have weaved and repeated our legends and traditions consecrated with this place for over a thousand years, and we do not wish to have them lightly put aside. Tom Hughes referred to them as "the traditions and dim legends which I and most Berkshire men have always faithfully believed, and shall go on believing to our dying day." And he further expressed his feelings towards this part of his native land in these words: "Having been all my life possessed, as is the case with so many Englishmen, by intense local attachment, love for every stone and turf of the country where I was born and bred." As for the story of Bagseege the Dane being buried here, we all regret that Sir Walter should have put a note in "Kenilworth" to this effect, taken, it would seem, from Camden's Britannica. "Tom Hughes" was probably more correct when he makes the charming old parson whom he met at the scouring of the White Horse in 1857, use these words referring to this cromlech: "Walter Scott, who should have known better, says the Danish King who was killed at Ashdone was buried there. He was no more buried there than in Westminster Abbey—Goodbye." And "Tom Hughes" adds, "and so he put his cob into a canter and went off along the Ridgeway."

BERKSHIRE CHURCHES.—I have been greatly interested in the articles on some of the Berkshire Churches. With regard to Uffington Church, I think the consecration crosses must have been of metal—probably bronze or copper, as no rust stains appear where they were affixed—as the rivet holes, four in each stone circle, still remain. Mr. Keyser also mentions the destruction of the south aisle of Longcote Church. This is about the only instance I remember of a Church being *reduced* in size. I do not think it was pulled down because the new Church at Fernham rendered it unnecessary, as both erections were due to the exertions of Archdeacon Bercns, Vicar of Shrivenham, and were built about the same time. I think the real reason of the aisle of Longcote Church being taken down was that it had been built, not only badly, but also on the top of graves and several vaults, which had given way and rendered the structure unsafe. I happened to make a rough sketch of it a year or so before it was demolished. There is a tradition in Longcote that the old Tower collapsed one Sunday just before service.

W. H. HALLAM.