

# PROCEEDINGS

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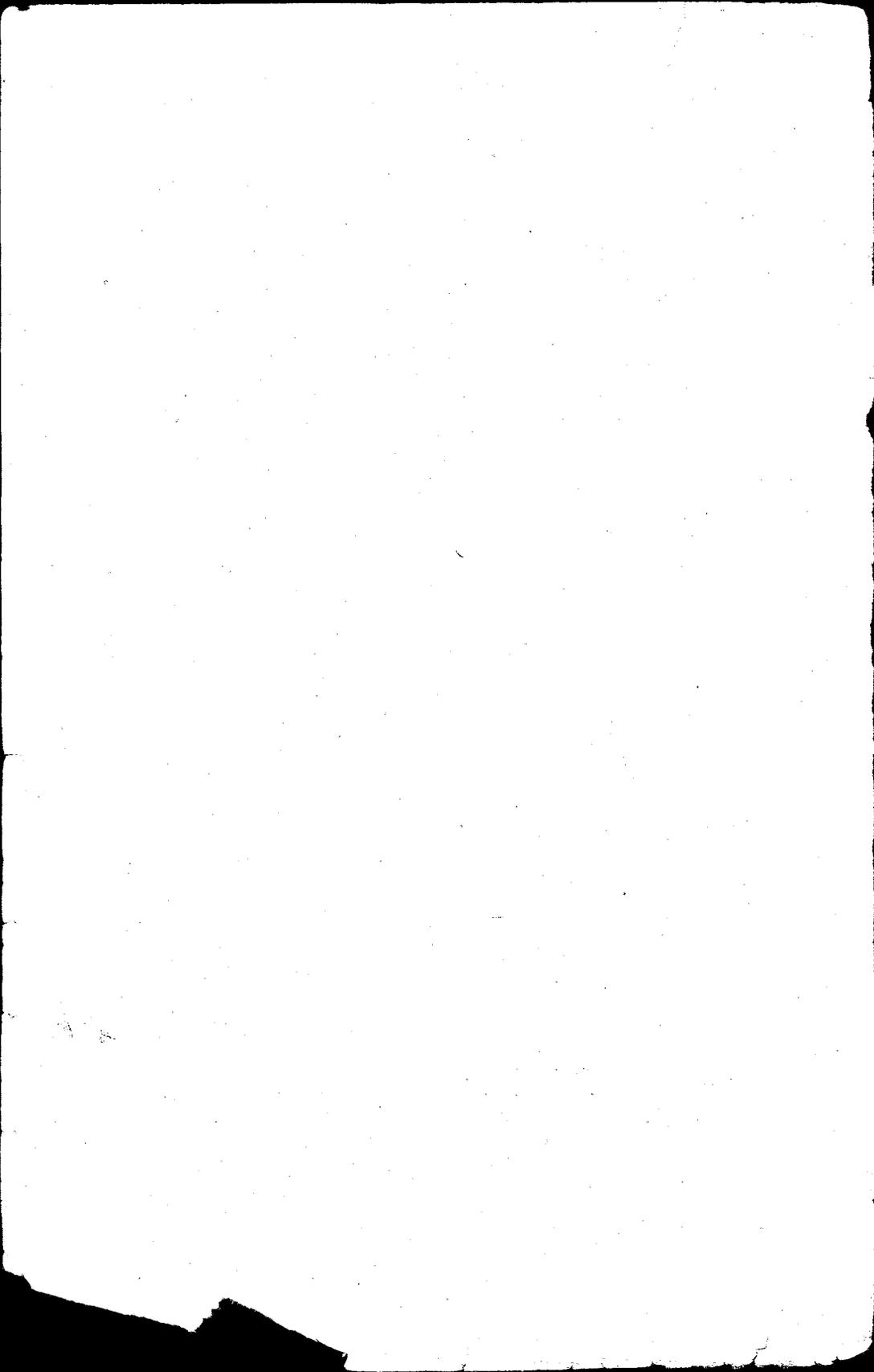
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Monday, 25 January 1904.

A. C. HADDON, Sc.D., F.R.S., President, in the Chair.

ON SOME ENGLISH VERSES WRITTEN IN A FIFTEENTH  
CENTURY SERVICE-BOOK; WITH A PARAPHRASE  
AND NOTES.

BY J. W. CLARK, M.A., Trinity College.

THE verses which form the subject of my paper are written in a service-book of the fifteenth century, now the property of Mr Henry Mellish, of Hodsock Priory, near Worksop, in Nottinghamshire. As I had the pleasure of exhibiting the volume to the Society in 1878, when my friend Mr Henry Bradshaw wrote the description of it which appears in the *Abstract of the Proceedings* for that year, I need not say much about it in this place. It will suffice to quote from his notes that "the body of the book, which is a large folio volume, contains the usual Sarum Kalendar, Horæ B. V. M., Litany, and Vigils of the Dead, followed by a complete Psalter, with the usual Canticles, and another Litany...On the last page of the Kalendar quire, facing the commencement of the Horæ B. V. M., the scribe has written, in lines of blue, crimson, black, and red, three eight-line stanzas, each having the same rhymes, about the book itself and John Harpur, by whose orders it was written." These lines have often been printed, but never quite accurately. I had an opportunity, when I was staying with the owner last autumn, of copying them at leisure; and, thanks to the kind help which I have received from my friend Professor Skeat, I hope that my transcript represents, fairly correctly, what the scribe originally wrote, or intended to write.

I should further premise that the Harpurs were lords of the manor of Rushale or Rushall in Staffordshire; and that our

John Harpur endowed the vicarage and built the church about 1444<sup>1</sup>. The book was originally chained in the church.

The chain, of iron, is attached to the middle of the left-hand board by a strong slip of brass put round the board, and kept in place by rivets. Next to this slip is the usual swivel, very like those in the chains still used in the Chapter Library at Hereford, one of which I have figured in *The Care of Books*<sup>2</sup>. This swivel is 4¼ in. long. It is succeeded by 21 links, strong, and very well made; they vary in length from 2¾ in. to 2 in. The whole length of the chain, including the swivel, is 4 ft. 2 in.

I will now quote the verses.

*blue* This present book legeble in scripture  
*red* Here in this place thus tacched with a cheyn  
*blue* Purposed of entent for to endure  
*red* And here perpetuelli stytle to remeyne  
*black* Fro eyre to eyre; wherfore appone peyn  
*red* Of cryst is curs of fader and of modere<sup>3</sup>  
*black* Non of hem hens atempt it to dereyne<sup>4</sup>  
*red* Whille ani leef may goodeli hange with oder

*blue* But for as moche that noo thyng may endure  
*red* That urthely ys alwey y trowe certeyn  
*blue* When so euer thys book here aftyr in scripture  
*red* Eyder in koueryng begynneth fause ayejn  
*black* All tho therto that diligencc doth or peyn  
*red* Hit to reforme be they on or other  
*black* Haue they the pardon that criste yafe magdaleyn  
*red* With daili blessyng of fader and of moder

*blue* Gret reson wolde that euery creatur  
*red* Meued of corage on hit to rede or feyn  
*blue* Shuld hym remembre in prayer that so sure  
*red* Bothe preest and place and bokes lust ordeyn  
*black* At his gret cost John Harpur noght to leyn<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Records of Rushall*...By F. W. Willmore, 8vo. Walsall, 1892, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. ii. p. 172, fig. 79.

<sup>3</sup> faders, moderes, ms: but the rhyme shows that this must be a slip on the part of the scribe.

<sup>4</sup> dereyne: to claim possession of; see *Deraign* in New E. Dict.

<sup>5</sup> noght to leyn = in point of fact. Leyn (says Professor Skeat) is a correct form, from A.S. *lēogan* = to tell lies.

*red* Wherfor in special his eires wyth all oder  
*black* Ar hyly bondon to pray the souereyn  
*red* Lord of all lordes present hym to hys moder.

Professor Skeat paraphrases these verses as follows:

This present book, legible in writing,  
 Here in this place thus attached with a chain,  
 Intended purposely to endure  
 And here perpetually ever to remain  
 From heir to heir: wherefore, upon pain  
 Of Christ's curse, and (curse) of father and of mother,  
 (Let) none of them attempt to remove (lit. claim) it hence  
 While any leaf may well hang to another.

But, forasmuch as that nothing may endure  
 For ever that is earthly, I trow for certain,  
 Whensoever this book, hereafter, in its writing  
 Or in its covering begins (to be) false again<sup>1</sup>—  
 All those that take heed or pains with regard to it,  
 With a view to amend it, be they one person or another,  
 May such (good people) have the pardon that Christ gave (Mary)  
 Magdalene  
 With daily blessing of father and of mother.

Great reason would require that everyone  
 (Who is) moved in his heart (i.e. inclined) to read in it, or (who  
 is) fain=eager (so to do).  
 Should remember him in prayer who so surely<sup>1</sup>  
 Lust (=was pleased) to provide both priest and place and books  
 At his (own) great cost (viz.) John Harpur—not to lie.  
 Wherefore, in special, his heirs, with all others,  
 Are highly bound to pray the sovereign (supreme)  
 Lord of all Lords to present him (Harpur) to His Mother.

Professor Skeat adds: "The general sense is clear, and the intention is admirable. But the grammar is very bad; owing to the insane desire to write 24 lines on only 3 rhymes: *-ure*; *-eyn*; *-oder*. I do not think there is any real difficulty beyond some clumsiness, such as writing: 'meued of corage on hit to

<sup>1</sup> Professor Skeat is of opinion that these words mean: "if this book by being re-copied or re-bound should be falsified—by mistakes in the writing or by being mis-bound."

rede or feyn,' when what he meant was: 'meued of (i.e. by) corage or feyn to rede on hit'."

In conclusion I would fain point out that, despite clumsiness and a foolish striving after the impossible, the writer of these lines offers a pleasing contrast to those monastic scribes who used to invoke the most terrible of penalties both here and hereafter on those who damaged their work<sup>1</sup>. Our poet on the contrary gently proclaims the merits, not of himself the writer, but of John Harpur the benefactor; and entreats all those who profit by his good deeds to respect his book, and pray that he may be rewarded.

Dr JAMES remarked that in a volume in the library of Caius College there is a similar set of English verses, and that these two sets are the only ones which he knew personally.

ON THE CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY CALLED CHESTS; WITH A TRANSCRIPT AND TRANSLATION OF THE DEED OF FOUNDATION AND STATUTES OF THE EARLIEST OF THESE, THE NEEL CHEST, 1344.

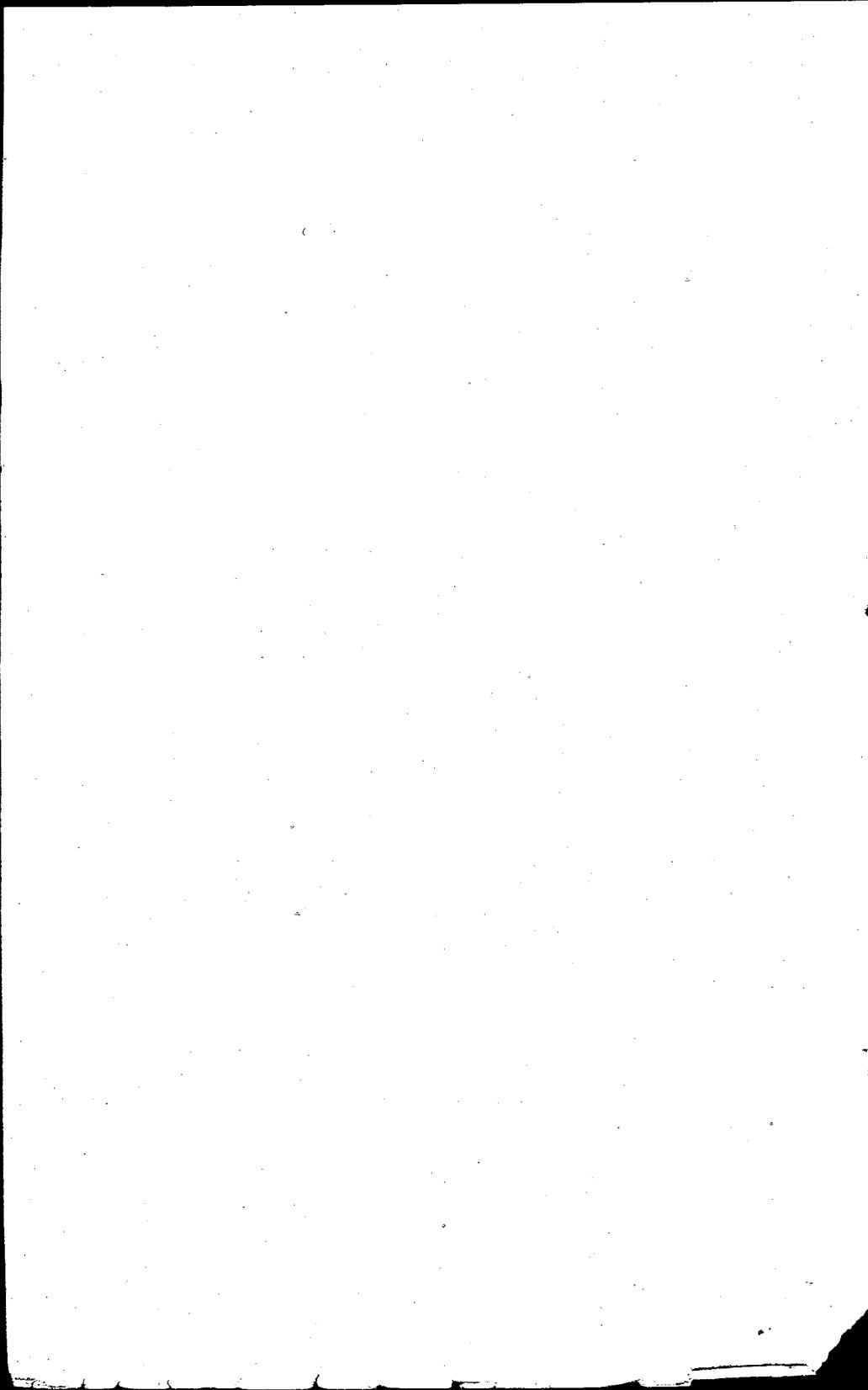
BY J. W. CLARK, M.A.

(a) GENERAL HISTORY.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries those who wished to help poor students at the University, by giving them the opportunity of borrowing money without interest, founded Chests; that is to say they gave to the University a sum of money with a chest to keep it in. This chest was deposited in a place of security and entrusted to wardens appointed by the Chancellor and Masters, who made themselves responsible for the proper administration of the fund contained in it.

The names of a considerable number of these chests have

<sup>1</sup> Some specimens of these have been collected in *The Care of Books, ut supra*, pp. 67—69.



# CONTENTS

OF PROCEEDINGS, No. XLV.

VOL. XI. (NEW SERIES, VOL. V.) No. 1.

	PAGE
Irish Folk Lore. By A. C. HADDON, Sc.D., F.R.S. . . . .	1
Exhibition of Russian Objects. By E. H. MINNS, M.A. . . . .	2
Iter V and IX of Antonine. By the Rev. A. C. YORKE . . . . .	2
English Verses in a Fifteenth Century MS. By J. W. CLARK, M.A. . . . .	75
University Chests. By the same . . . . .	78
Cambridgeshire Maps. By H. G. FORDHAM . . . . .	101
Utensils and Weapons of the Sakhalin Gilyaks. By C. H. HAWES, M.A. . . . .	173
Miscellaneous Exhibitions . . . . .	173
Ceremonial of the Toda Dairy. By W. H. RIVERS, M.D. . . . .	180
Annual General Meeting . . . . .	180
Ickleton Church and Priory. By A. R. GODDARD . . . . .	181
Comedy of Pedantius. By G. C. MOORE SMITH, M.A. . . . .	195
Miscellaneous Exhibitions . . . . .	196
Annual Report, 16 May 1904 . . . . .	196
Summary of Accounts for 1903 . . . . .	201
New members elected, 1903-4 . . . . .	202
Additions to the Library . . . . .	203
Purchases made for the Museum . . . . .	206
List of Officers and Council . . . . .	208