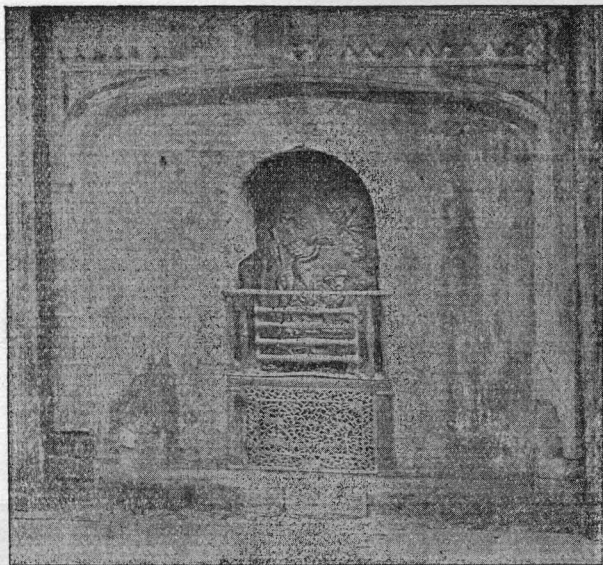


## An Old Fire Place.

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By the kindness of Mr. Walton Adams we are able to give our readers a very beautiful illustration of an old fireplace which has been rescued by Mr. Ravenscroft from the ruins of an old gabled house in Minster Street, Reading, of which street improvements necessitated the destruction. The story of the development of beautifully carved and moulded fire-backs and fireplaces remains to be written, and it would be interesting to trace the course of the



improvements from the primitive hearth in the centre of the old Saxon and Norman hall, to the invention of the dog-grate with the wide chimney, when fire-backs became fashionable, leading on to the luxurious grates of modern times ; but that would take much space and much research. We desire to thank Mr. Adams for preserving for us this picture of an interesting work of art, and append a letter from Mr. Ravenscroft descriptive of the same.

22, The Forbury,  
Reading,  
September 13th, 1899.

Dear Sir,

In answer to your enquiry the only thing I can say about the fireplace is that it was taken out of an old gabled house in Minster Street which

had to come down for the purposes of widening the street, and although undoubtedly the house in part was of earlier date, such indications as are given by this fireplace and of some panelling and other woodwork taken from the building point to their being work of the 17th century. One curious thing about the fireplace is that what appeared at first to be moulded stonework surrounding the grate turned out on further examination to be only a kind of cement imitation, and would suggest this as a very early use of such material for decorative purposes. The grate itself with the back is quite interesting, especially the brass fretwork on the lower part of the grate, which being hinged on the bottom edge drops down and forms a shelf for keeping things hot in front of the fire. The back as usual represents some classic scene.

Yours truly,

W. RAVENSCROFT.

Mr. Walton Adams.

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## Proceedings of Societies.

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ON Wednesday, July 26th, the Berks Archæological Society, in conjunction with the Reading Literary and Scientific Society, made an excursion to Salisbury, Old Sarum, Amesbury, and Stonehenge, which passed off very successfully. The party was favoured with delightful weather, and the cool and refreshing breezes experienced on Salisbury plains were very pleasant after the recent trying heat. Amongst the company of antiquarians who assembled to take part in the excursion were—Mr. C. E. Keyser, F.S.A., President of the Society, the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, F.S.A., Honorary Secretary of the Berks Archæological Society, and Mrs. Ditchfield, Mr. Theodore H. White, Honorary Secretary of the Reading Literary and Scientific Society, the Misses Monk-Smith, Mr. Stephen Darby (Cookham Dean), Dr. Playne (Maidenhead), Mr. and Mrs. Wyly, Mr. and Mrs. T. R. Kent, Mr. Charles Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, Mr. W. Haynes, Mr. Walton Adams, Mrs. Staniford, &c.

The party left Reading, travelling by the G.W. Railway at 9.53. At Basingstoke they were the victims of the unsatisfactory relations existing between the rival railway companies, which refuse to run their trains in connection, and cause vast inconvenience to the public. Owing to the G.W. train being a few minutes late the party