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The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

Gossip of an Antiquary.

OWING to the pile of manuscript on our Editor's table, and the numerous important articles which must be printed, my lighter gossip and random jottings have been quite crowded out. However, as this is the first number of a new volume I have been allowed to resume my wonted way and to discourse *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis.*

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There was a large gathering of the Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries a few weeks ago, when the President of the Berks Society gave a learned discourse on the Norman Doorways in the Oxford Diocese. A large number of illustrations were shown, some of which are reproduced in this Journal. The Berks Society will have the advantage of hearing Mr. Keyser lecture on the Norman Doorways of Bucks and Oxon Churches on April 25th.

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Wishing to refer to a favourite book the other day I found to my horror that it was missing from its wonted place, and I remembered that someone had borrowed it. Who my friend is, I cannot remember. No wonder book-lovers rejoiced in the old rhyming warnings against book-borrowers. Here is one as old as the days of black letter printing:

Hee that lends to all and none deneys
Shows himself more kinde than wyse;
But who deneys all and lends to none
Hath a heart as hard as stone.

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Sir Walter Scott suffered severely from the book-borrower, and used to say, "Although most of my friends are bad arithmeticians they are good book-keepers." A collection of book rhymes and traditional flyleaf inscriptions would be interesting. Perhaps my readers will kindly furnish me with some.

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In Volume II. of this Journal there appeared an interesting article on "The study of a carved corbel in Ewelme Church," by Miss Margaret L. Huggins, in which the authoress by comparing the head with the portraits of our English Kings endeavoured to prove that the head represented was that of Edward III. The recently published "Diaries of Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys," by Mrs. Climenson, entirely confirms this view. In describing this Church she wrote, "Over one of the pillars is a good stone head of Edward III. like his pictures." Miss Huggins will be delighted to hear of this confirmation of her conjecture.

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It is well-known that Reading is a great centre of Freemasonry, the secrets of which may never be disclosed. In the book of ritual appears the word *to hele*, meaning to conceal. The word is unusual and the signification not generally known. It is curious that it occurs in the burgess oath of Reading, and in a copy of about the date 1430 a gloss has been inserted in the margin explaining the word as to "kepe close." The secrets of Freemasonry evidently fell on congenial soil in the minds of the burgesses of Reading who were accustomed to keep a secret.

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Who first invented spectacles? These aids to vision appear to have come into use about the Fourteenth Century. The earliest reference to them is in the work of Bernard Gordon, Professor at Montpellier, who speaks of a collyrium devised by him which allowed a person to read without spectacles. In 1360 Guy de Chauliac, in his treatise on surgery, refers to the use of lenses. The invention of spectacles is sometimes attributed to Roger Bacon, who died in

1224. Further research, however, has shown that in 1215 Savino degli Armati, a Florentine, was the first who worked glass into the form of a lens. For him, therefore, may justly be claimed the honour of having invented spectacles. He died in Florence in 1317, and was buried in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore. On the stone is the following inscription :—

"Qui giace
Savino degli Armati
di Firenze,
Inventore degli occhiali
Dio gli perdoni le peccata
Anno D MCCCXVII,"

(Here lies Savino degli Armati, of Florence, inventor of spectacles. May God forgive his sins.)

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The Oxford University Press has just issued a valuable handbook on coins by Mr. Grueber, F.S.A., of the British Museum. His remarks on the coins of Oxford are especially interesting to local antiquaries, and are worth repeating: "Most of the local mints were not established till after the breaking of the Civil War, at which time the Parliament seized the Tower mint and continued for a while to strike coins in the King's name. . . . The only local mints to strike gold coins were Oxford and Bristol. The denominations were the unite and the half-unite ; but of Oxford there is the three-pound piece or triple-unite. These somewhat remarkable pieces are said to have been coined from gold found in Wales and supplied by Thomas Bushell. Some unusually large pieces in silver were also coined of the value of 20s. and 10s. These were, however, practically limited to Oxford and Shrewsbury. On many of his silver coins and on all his gold issued at the local mints, Charles adopted for the reverse type what is known as the "Declaration" type, being an abbreviation of the legend, "Religio Protestantium, Leges Angliae, Libertas Parliamenti," or in substance his declaration to the Privy Council, September 19, 1642. The most remarkable coin of this type is the crown struck at Oxford, showing the King on horseback with a view of the city in the background. The coin was the work of Thomas Rawlins, who was for a long time engraver at the Tower mint; and when the king's mint was located at Oxford he removed there also and superintended its operations. A large portion of the money coined at Oxford was made from silver plate belonging to the colleges. Also a number of private persons sent in their plate to be used in a similar manner."