



Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—The first meeting of the Winter Session of this Society was held at the Reading Museum, on November 29th, when a lecture and demonstration were given by the Rev. Alan Cheales, Hon. Curator of the Historical Department, on the Egyptian and Greek Collections recently presented to the Museum. Lord Saye and Sele presided, and there was a fair attendance of members of the Berks Archæological Society. The Lecturer having been introduced by the Chairman, extended a hearty welcome to the members of the Society, and pointed out the re-arrangement by which the Romano-Reading remains are shown in one case; those of the Abbey (sadly scanty) in another; the Greek, Etruscan and Cyprian pottery, &c., in a turret case, and the Egyptian in a large wall case, all of which had been skilfully re-arranged by Mr. Colyer. He then proceeded to speak of the excellent and interesting Bland collection of Greek vases, 19 in number. This series is now increased by the 270 articles, chiefly sepulchral, from Corinth, lately presented by Lord Arthur Hill. The large collection of lamps was pointed out, and the oil vessels to replenish them, which owing to their smallness, must have often been necessary. He then referred to the large vases mounting the turret, long lent by Mr. Snare and lately purchased by the Corporation. The vases are fine specimens of Greek Art, and such as used to be given as prizes at the games, and as wedding and other presents. They were in fact the *sèvres china* of the old world, and were carried far and wide in commerce by the Phœnicians. He also described the different style of decoration on the Etruscan vases; spoke of the alabaster sarcophagi, and how a man's chiefest treasures were frequently buried with him. Turning to the wall case containing the Egyptian remains, the Lecturer spoke of the large addition lately made through Professor Petrie and the good offices of Miss Lawes. The Museum now possesses some of the oldest pottery in the world, dating before B.C. 5,000, consisting partly of food vessels entombed with the departed, that its "Ka" or shadow might be fed: probably much as Bel was shown by Daniel to feed on his nutriments. The study of Egyptian archæology was strongly pressed. Egypt is at

once the richest in remains, the oldest, and also the newest country in the world. Its troops are shown by the Theban wall sculptures to be most exact descendants of the men who carried standards of Rameses II. to the Euphrates. Egypt as a Bible land was also spoken of; and its close connection with Palestine from the time of Abraham to the day when it sheltered the Holy Child. After pointing out various special objects of interest, Mr. Cheales concluded with a portion of Horace Smith's famous lines to a mummy. A vote of thanks was proposed at the conclusion by Lord Saye and Sele, seconded by the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, and suitably acknowledged.

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BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—A meeting of the Berks Archæological Society was held on February 21st, at the Abbey Gateway, when the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, of Barkham (hon. secretary), was voted to the chair. The Chairman began by inviting members to give their opinions as to the custody of documents. As they knew, a Committee had been appointed by the House of Lords, including the Bishop of London and other learned men, and they wanted to collect information about how documents were preserved, and what chance there was of improving present arrangements for the custody of parish, municipal and other registers, &c. He himself would be sorry if parish records were removed from the custody of incumbents, but many people seemed to think that they would be better kept in large central places. He would like the opinion of the Society on the matter. The Rev. Alan Cheales then read a most thoughtful and deeply interesting paper on "Homer and Holy Writ." Homer had been happily styled "the father of poetry," but he was more—he was its master-mind. It had taken 30 centuries to produce one Homer, and he stood alone upon a pedestal more than "six feet above" criticism. Not only had there been no poet since to equal him, but all others had had to imitate.

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY BRASS-RUBBING SOCIETY.—The first evening meeting of the October term was held on Wednesday evening, November 15th, in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. During the Long Vacation progress has been made with one of the Society's main objects, the restoration of loose brasses in the neighbourhood of Oxford. A loose inscription to William Hyldelesley and his wife

Margaret, 1576, at Crowmarsh Giffard, has been relaid in what remained of its original slab, under the superintendence of the Rev. J. E. Field, Vicar of Benson. At Checkendon, the interesting inscription to Edmund and Cristina Rede, 1435, engraved on the reverse of part of a canopied brass of c. 1400, has been fixed to the slab. The key of the screws is in the custody of the Rector, and the brass can thus be taken up by those who wish to rub the reverse side. A framed rubbing of both sides is hung close by on the wall, for the information of casual visitors. The work was done at the cost and under the superintendence of Mr. J. Challenor Smith, F.S.A., acting on behalf of the Society. Mr. H. G. de Watteville, Christ Church, then exhibited, and gave an account of, five rubbings which are very shortly to be reproduced in the Society's forthcoming Oxford Portfolio of Monumental Brasses.—1, Matrix of Sir Hugh le Blount, 1314, Aston Rowant, Oxon; 2, John Rede, 1404, Checkendon, Oxon; 3, Sir John Drayton, 1417, Dorchester, Oxon; 4, Thomas Walysch, c. 1420, Whitchurch, Oxon; 5, Matthew de Codt and his wife Marie, 1478, Nieuport-ville, Flanders. The Rev. W. Marshall, King's College, Cambridge, and Minor Canon of Windsor, gave an interesting lecture on "The Direct Photography of Brasses." Mr. Marshall drew attention to some of the advantages of the photographic method over the ordinary rubbing, the first and foremost being that the photograph represents the "feeling" of a brass in a way no rubbing can show. The lecturer spoke of the labour and time required to make a rubbing of a large brass. For instance, the rubbing of John Rede's brass at Checkendon, shown on the wall the same evening, took over an hour, and then required several hours' work afterwards in touching up; whereas the lecturer had been able to photograph most of the brasses at New College, some 26 in number, in one morning. Mr. Marshall, however, frankly admitted some of the defects of the photographic method. He showed an excellent set of some 60 slides, arranged chronologically and including those of Sir John Drayton, 1417, from Dorchester, Oxon; Archbishop Cranley, 1417, New College; Priest and Franklin, c. 1370, Shottesbroke, Berks; Richard Hakebourne, 1310, Merton College. Besides brasses, slides were shown of the curious composite, half stone effigy, half brass, to William Throckmorton, 1535, Shottesbroke, Berks, an incised slab from Melton Mowbray, and the Altar tomb with two fine effigies of St. George's, Windsor, to George Manners, Lord Roos and his wife, 1525, all of which were of equal excellence with the other slides.

READING LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.—The President (Mr. O. A. Shrubsole, F.G.S.,) was in the chair at a largely attended meeting of this Society, held on March 13th. at the Abbey Hall. The Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A., F.R. Hist. S., contributed a very interesting paper under the title of "A Day in a Monastery." Mr. Ditchfield said by far the most interesting feature of Reading was the remains of its ancient Abbey, in spite of the vandalism of bygone days, and he had often tried to picture the life lived on that hallowed spot, and to understand the feelings, mode of life, and daily existence of the monks. They were all indebted to Dr. Hurry for his historical chart, and his plan of the Abbey. His attempt was on that occasion to discover what feelings filled the hearts that beat beneath the monks' robes, and to find out what they did for the benefit of humanity and the improvement of the age in which they lived. Berkshire once boasted 35 monastic houses in all, Abingdon, Reading and Bisham being the greatest monasteries, as possessing an income of more than £200 a year. The income of Reading Abbey at the dissolution was something like £2,000, which represented about £20,000 of present day money. Mr. Ditchfield then referred to the destruction of monastic buildings all over the country, and the derivations of their names, and proceeded to expatiate pleasantly on the life lived in them, and the services the monks rendered to mankind, dwelling on their great learning, their encouragement of art and handicrafts, their greatness as architects, their compassion for the poor and sick, and the whole-hearted friendship which existed between the brethren. The lecture (for which Mr. Ditchfield was heartily thanked) was illustrated by many lovely lantern slides, showing most of the principal monastic ruins in the kingdom.

