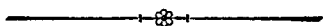




The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.



Gossip of an Antiquary.

I HAVE received many interesting Book Rhymes from various Correspondents, and shall soon possess a full collection, for which I beg to return my most grateful thanks. Here is one taken from a book of Greek Epigrams (Eton : E. Williams, 1828) :—

Jenner Marshall owneth me
Et is me jure tenet
And I his book confess to be
Quicunque me invenit.

Wargrave School, 1830.

The book "Grace abounding in the life of John Bunyan" (12^{mo}. London, 1749) contains the following rhyme :—

James Cornish his book
God give him grace therein to look
Not to look but understand
For learning is better than house or land
When house and land is gone and money is spent
Then learning is most excellent.

James Cornish his book, 1754.

Martha Smith her book, October 20, 1754.

Our forefathers loved their books so much that they made them the repositories of their bereavements, and recorded in them the deaths of the members of the family. Thus in "The Lively Oracles given to us" (3rd Ed. : 8^{vo}. at the Theatre in Oxford, 1679) is recorded :—

Gossip of an Antiquary.

Richard Talbot his book
 God give him grace therein
 to look and when the book
 doath for him look Lord Jesus
 Christ Revive his Soule. Amen.

May 5th, 1693, his age is 28 years.

Below is written by his widow :—

“November ye 7, 1719, my poore deare Richard Talbot departed this life between one and two o'clock in the morning it was one a Saturday, his age was then 54 years.” And again there is another entry :—“Mrs. Dorothy Talbot wife of the said Richard Talbot departed this life between 4 & 5 o'clock in the afternoon on Friday the 19 day of Aug. 1726 in the 70th year of her age.”

Very familiar are the rhymes—

. is my name England is my nation
 is my dwelling place And Christ is my salvation.

Or, Steal not this book for fear of shame
 For in it you see the owner's name
 And if I catch you by the tail
 You must prepare for Newgate jail.

The last lines sometimes run—

And when you die the Lord will say,
 Where is that book you stole away.

Less common is the following, much in vogue at Rugby :—

Small is the wren	This book is one thing
Black is the rook	My fist is another
Great is the sinner	Touch this one thing
That steals this book.	You'll soon feel the other.

In an old Bible imprinted at London by the Deputies of Christopher Barker, 1598, I find the familiar lines—

Richard Millword is my name
 And with my pen I writ this same
 And if my pen had been better
 I had mended every letter.

There is certainly room for improvement in Richard Millword's writing, and his spelling is peculiar.

Not to weary my readers with too many of these “choice selections,” I will close with a rhyme taken from a copy of *Æsop's Fables* July 7th, 1775 :—

The rose is red, the grass is green
 The days are spent which I have seen
 When I am dead then ring my knell
 And take my book and use him well.

But we must not forget the *finis* which is thus interpreted by Schoolboys:—

F for Francis I for Jancis N for Nickley Boney
I for John the Waterman and S for Signey Coney.

* * *

I hear with much dismay that a large portion of the hospitium of Reading Abbey is doomed. Such destruction is deplorable. It appears that it is necessary to enlarge the Town Hall. So the old building which has witnessed so many scenes and changes, which entertained the crowds of guests who flocked to enjoy the hospitality of the Abbey, has to go and make room for "modern improvements." It is a sad pity.

* * *

I have been reading the rules laid down for the guidance of the hospitarius or hosteller who entertained the guests of Barnwell Priory, Cambridgeshire, which are not devoid of amusement. He was required to have "facility of expression, elegant manners, and a respectable bringing up," and it is especially recommended that he should have a cheerful countenance and stock of fair words at his disposal should he "have no substance to bestow, for friends are multiplied by agreeable words."

Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—A very largely attended meeting of the members of this Society was held on April 25th, at the Abbey Gateway, Reading, under the presidency of Mr. C. E. Keyser, M.A., F.S.A. (President). The Treasurer (Mr. Ravenscroft) informed the meeting that the Committee had arranged, by private subscription among themselves, to buy two small doors which once belonged to the famous "Oracle" in Reading. There was no question as to their being authentic, and they were exceedingly interesting specimens of early Renaissance work, showing also traces of the old Tudor carving which lingered so long into the Renaissance period.