



The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

Gossip of an Antiquary.

I am writing my notes in an old fashioned English garden, and very delightful it is, with its old yew hedges at least a century old, its lawns and flowers and trees, while beyond the oaks of the park lend their shade and form many a charming glimpse of forest scenery. In these days there are few old gardens left, only the wreckage of their beauty. Pope and Addison scoffed at the old formal style of gardening when

“Each alley has a brother,

And half the garden just reflects the other.”

Then arose Bridgeman and Kent, who set to work to hew down the old hedges, destroy the parterres, pull down the walls, and introduce the imitation of nature, and the “new English style.”

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Why should people imitate wild nature in devising a garden? The garden is a product of civilisation, and its very charm is that it is taken out of savagery, trimmed, clothed and disciplined. The walls and hedges are almost necessities with us to cut off the wind, See how flowers of all kinds luxuriate if given the screen from the biting blast. The rose hates wind and loves to be sheltered from its enemy, and human roses bloom and thrive far better when protected from the keen eastern and northern winds.

This cutting of yews into strange shapes was the only disfigurement in the old garden, and against this Addison scoffed with much satirical humour, giving a catalogue of "Greens to be disposed of by an eminent town gardener," such as "St. George in box ; his arm scarce long enough, but will be in a condition to strike the dragon by next April.—Divers Eminent poets in bays, somewhat blighted, to be disposed of a pennyworth—a quickset hedge shot up into a porcupine, by its being forgot a week in rainy weather, &c." In this garden where I am writing much of its old character remains—long may it continue—and if you have to lay out a garden, adopt the old garden plan and avoid as heresy the productions of Kent and Wright and Brown and Eames and their detestible innovations.

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It is curious to trace the similarity of our old English gardens with the Italian models, the Boboli gardens at Florence or the Medici at Rome. The fashion of the Italian method was introduced to this country by Inigo Jones, who had studied the works of Palladio and effected a complete revolution in the arrangement of our gardens. Terraces adjoin the house, the lawn declining from thence ; there was a flower garden with a fountain in the centre, the walks bordered with box, the trees sheered into whimsical artificial forms, together with fountains, alcoves and summer-houses.

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As in duty bound I attended the Congress of Archæological Societies at Burlington House in July last, where there was much interesting discussion. Strong feelings were expressed about the necessity of enlarging the British Museum in order to accommodate the vast pile of newspapers, and the destruction of worthless printed matter was deprecated. The question, "What is worthless?" is difficult to answer. Even Christmas cards were said to be of some value. The only papers which were declared absolutely worthless are old local railway time-tables, and of this fact there could be no doubt.

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The Union of Benefices Bill was strongly opposed by the assembled antiquaries, on the ground of the great danger involved to the old churches which would be abandoned and left to decay, desecration and destruction. Sir John Evans introduced the subject of

Treasure Trove, which is a matter of such great concern to collectors. It appears that the authorities have begun recently to strenuously enforce the law which has hitherto been used leniently.

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The consequences are most disastrous in several ways. In the first place the finder of a treasure is tempted to conceal the circumstances and locality of the find, which are of the utmost importance archæologically.

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In the second place private collectors are deterred from the purchase of articles of value, since the Treasury may, at any interval of time, claim the articles. Thirdly, the interests of the public collections of the country are sacrificed, since articles found are naturally sent abroad where they can be disposed of at their full value.

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Sir John Evans pointed out that private collectors are the best friends of Museums, since they are able to acquire with the necessary promptitude, articles of great value, and not only are the collections often presented or bequeathed to the public, but they are in any case subject to dispersal sooner or later, when the Museums are able to acquire what they need.

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Mr. Stanley Leighton, M.P., pointed out the extreme dangers of the law, instancing the case of the Gold Treasure discovered on the shores of Ireland, the inquest on which would have to determine whether the presumption was in favour of these articles having been deliberately hidden 1700 years ago or accidentally abandoned, and whether the place of finding was at the time sea or land.

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Considerable surprise was expressed at the action of Mr. Balfour in now claiming on behalf of the Crown this Irish-found treasure, the acquisition of which by the British Museum, he had four years previously sanctioned, as First Lord of the Treasury, and it was pointed out that such retrospective action entirely unsettled the whole proprietorship of the public and private collections in the Country.

Mr. Willis-Bund pointed out that the Treasury exposed themselves by such actions to the gravest difficulties, since in all parts of the country treasure-trove often belonged to the Lords of the Manors, who would be able to enforce unforeseen claims against the Treasury.

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The following resolution by Mr. J. H. Round will be of interest to our local antiquaries on the subject of Place Names, concerning which there is so much ignorance and obscurity :—

“That this Congress recognizes the need for the treatment of English Place Names on a uniform and scientific system, and believes that it would be directly conducive to the advancement of historical knowledge on important and disputed questions. It recommends that this work should be undertaken, County by County, in accordance with rules to be drawn up for the purpose of uniformity by a central Committee, and it hopes that Archæological and other local Societies will co-operate for their several districts in this national work.”

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Mr. Jenner Marshall, of Westcott-Barton Manor, whose library contains several of the book-rhymes recorded in the last Journal, writes to point out that “Wargrave School, 1830,” ought to have been “Warfield School,” where he was a pupil from 1826 to 1832. This school was of high repute for many years under the “Faithfull” family, and there must be now very few left to recollect its teaching and discipline at that period. Mr. Marshall was born in 1817. After the death of the Rev. Robert Faithfull, who was vicar of Warfield in 1839, the Vicarage and school went out of the family, and the house was burnt to the ground in 1842. The old schoolroom and some outbuildings are still in existence.

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I am glad to see that our Berkshire authoress, Mrs. Stephen Batson, is about to publish a commentary on the work of the famous Persian poet, Omar Rub-a'iy-at. She analyses the poet's frame of mind as revealed in each successive quatrain, and quotes parallels from English poets and other writers. I trust her work will be very successful.