



The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

Gossip of an Antiquary.

An amusing case came before the Law Courts the other day which arose from the discovery of certain gold ornaments found at Limavady, county Kerry, by a ploughman at work in a field near Lough Foyle. The treasure comprised a hollow collar with *repousse* ornaments, a hollow boat with thwarts and a number of oars and spars, a bowl, a gold torque, and some chains, all carefully packed together, and lying in a space of about nine inches at the bottom of the furrow which the plough had turned up. Expert evidence was given that the articles were of Celtic origin, and of beautiful workmanship, and it was suggested that their date might be any time between 300 B.C. and 600 or 700 A.D. The learned Judge, however, thought that they might fairly be attributed to the Second or Third Century after Christ. The British Museum authorities had purchased these articles, but the Crown, in deference to the outcry of the Irish archæologists, who desired to see them preserved in Dublin, claimed them under its prerogative. The contention of the Museum authorities was that they were not treasure trove; and that, even if they were, they were vested not in the Crown, but in the Irish Society under the Ulster Charter of 1613.

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A most interesting theory was set up that the articles were thrown into the ocean—which, it was suggested, then covered the spot—as a votive offering by some Irish Sea King or Chief to an Irish Sea God

at a period between 300 B.C. or 100 A.D., and, therefore, in Pagan times. The learned Judge very unsympathetically described all these as ingenious but groundless hypotheses, more suited to the poem of a Celtic bard than the prose of a modern law reporter. All alike was mythical—the pre-supposed Sea Kings who would be likely to make such votive offerings, and the existence of any custom of the kind in Ireland at the period in question. Many reasons of a geological and historical kind were advanced by the Court to show that some other explanation must be sought for the discovery of the articles where they were found. The view adopted, though of a comparatively common-place nature, suggests old-world events, surrounded with an atmosphere of mystery. Probably the ornaments represent the store of a native Chief, or the spoils gathered in the raid of some Norse pirate. They were packed closely together, and the chains were concealed within the hollow of the collar, in the mode which a person hiding them for safety, with a view to reclaiming them, would probably adopt.

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There was no evidence as to the date of the concealment ; but Ulster was a region from the beginning of its history where treasure was likely to be concealed. In 850 A.D. there had been a Norse invasion of the land, including the spot in which these articles were found ; what more likely than that its Celtic owners had deposited them there until danger should have passed ? The Court inferred from the care with which everything had been deposited that the danger was not actually so imminent that the treasure was intended to be abandoned. Thus the deposit came under the ordinary description of treasure trove, though, if the votive offering had been proved, it would not have followed that the Crown's right would have been ousted. As to the other contentions of the Museum authorities, it was held that the Crown's rights had not been transferred to the Irish Society ; and the Court ordered the delivery of the articles to the agents of the Crown, and they will now, no doubt, find their way at last to Dublin.

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The British Museum authorities will doubtless feel somewhat annoyed at the result of this litigation, and it is possible that this interesting case may hasten on some legislation with regard to the whole subject of "treasure trove." At present there is so much uncertainty about the law relating to this subject, that private collectors

are becoming more and more cautious in acquiring objects for their cabinets. The authorities recently have showed an inclination to press the law somewhat unduly, and to lay claim to all objects of value which may be discovered. In order to assert their rights, they must prove that the objects were hidden. If there is no evidence of secretion the Crown cannot claim. The theories advanced by the British Museum authorities were ingenious but hardly conclusive. Not being an Irishman, I cannot but regret that these priceless objects should not be seen in the British Museum. It is important that the authorities of the Crown should not be too eager to press the law of Treasure Trove; otherwise, private collectors will become more and more afraid of buying objects which have been discovered. After all, the Crown benefits largely, and practically depends for any great increase of our national collections upon the private collector, who usually bequeaths his treasures to the British Museum.

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The discovery of these unique treasures only shows what valuable and curious objects are stored in our islands, and may be discovered at any time by the diligent searcher. The antiquary must always live on hope. Fortune does not often favour the present writer. He hears of many finds, but they are always discovered by someone else. He is, however, still hoping to meet with, if not a votive-offering of an Irish King to an Irish Sea-God, at least, an urn of old coins, or something which our careless ancestors had thoughtlessly cast away. They must not have hidden it, or the Crown will forcibly deprive me of it, unless I, too, hide it from the world in the most secret drawer of my cabinet.

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Milton may justly be claimed as a Buckinghamshire poet, and the charming cottage at Chalfont St. Giles and Horton were his favourite homes. We imagined that most of the local colour of his poems was derived from English scenes and landscapes, but Mrs. Fanny Byse has just published a charming little book entitled *MILTON ON THE CONTINENT* (Elliot Stock), which obliges us to modify our view. The writer believes she has discovered when and where *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* first saw the light. Having made a special study of the subject for many years, she suggests that the different persons that flit before our eyes, as they glance over the fine mosaic of these writings, coincide curiously with men and women whom Milton really met in his travels abroad, when, at the age of

30, he had fairly shuffled off the Elizabethan conceits so prominent in *Comus* and *Lycidas*, and was turning his steps, in a sense both literal and literary,

‘To fresh woods and pastures new.’

On close observation, the author finds, in these picture galleries of Mirth and Melancholy, that each portrait is placed in its proper frame: the New Rowena, arbiter of taste, among the

‘Throngs of knights and barons bold’

of Rambouillet; the peasants of the Swiss Mi-été in the ‘upland hamlets’; Galileo, outwatching the Bear that never sets, in the tower of Arcetri.

This work, which contains the text of the two poems, is a complete literary thesis tending to prove that *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were written in 1639—40, at the turning point between Milton’s earlier career and the years ‘when the rising tide of political passion, ‘submerging the sublime Arcadia of his early fancies, dominated and ‘informed all his later poems, dictating even their subjects.’

It has been remarked that writers on Milton say so little of his interviews with Galileo, which must necessarily have made a great impression on his mind. The author has made researches on the Italian side of the question. An article by von Reumont in the *Archivio Storico Romano* brings out the peculiarly melancholy character of the old astronomer at the end of his life, and thus makes him a fit inmate for the ‘hairy cell’ of *Il Penseroso*.

The work contains several illustrations, among these, the original portrait, obtained from a pencil-drawing in Galileo’s tower itself. There is every reason to believe that Sustermans, who is called ‘The Flemming’ in his correspondence, took the sketch unseen by the jealous eyes which watched his retreat, and that from this his two well-known pictures in the ‘Pitti’ and ‘Uffizzi’ galleries were produced. The book will prove a friendly companion to students who travel to Switzerland, and as I am just going there and to the neighbourhood of Bex, I shall endeavour, with Mrs. Byse’s assistance to see what Milton saw.

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The Victoria County History is progressing slowly, so the Editor tells me. He would be glad to hear of some additional workers. There is a chapter on the Sport of the County, and as the Thames bounds Berkshire the story of Berkshire Rowing has to be told. In spite of many endeavours he has not been able to find out the dates

of the foundation of the several rowing clubs which have their stations on the Berkshire bank, or gather information about the Regattas, what clubs usually compete, and the distinguished oarsmen who are members of the club. Radley rowing has been done admirably by Mr. Woodgate, famous as an oarsman ; perhaps others will kindly collect some information about the other Clubs and Regattas. This can scarcely be called archæological.

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Disciples of Isaac Walton will welcome the new and cheap edition of *WALTON AND THE EARLIER FISHING WRITERS*, by a great fisherman, Mr. R. B. Marston (Booklovers' Library, Elliot Stock.) It is certainly one of those "companionable books that tempt us out of doors and keep us there." There is a delightful introduction which shows that what Mr. Marston does not know about fishing is not knowledge, and he introduces us to delightful company, to William Wallace, who turned to fishing for recreation, as did Washington and our Lord Nelson, Dame Juliana Berners with her wondrous baits, Leonard Moscall, the pioneer of fish culture, Michael Angelo, John Denny, Gervase Markham, and a host of others, in addition to Isaac Walton himself, of whose ever-green "*The Compleat Angler*," Charles Lamb used to say "it might sweeten a man's temper at any time to read."

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The rain, it raineth every day, as I am writing these lines, and the spirits of anglers as well as antiquaries are depressed by the continual downpour. We who live in the Thames Valley have especially cause for rue. My neighbour sums up the situation admirably. "Yesterday," he says, "the river was at the bottom of my garden ; to day, my garden is at the bottom of the river." Nothing more remains to be said.

Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—A lecture on English Village Life, past and present, was given by the Secretary on April 2nd, and on June 5th the Annual Meeting was held, when the officers of the Society were elected, the Reports read, and an admirable lecture