



The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

Gossip of an Antiquary.

The destruction of ancient buildings always causes grief to lovers of antiquity. It is much to be deplored, but is perhaps inevitable. Antiquarian societies can do some good in preventing the pulling down of interesting examples of ancient architecture, but the march of "progress" too often renders their efforts void of result. From all quarters the news of possible destruction comes. In Egypt the construction of the Assouan Dam has caused the flooding of the temples at Philæ. I am glad to hear that the masonry has stood firm, but the painted surfaces are fast losing their colour. It is now proposed to raise the level an additional 20 feet. This will possibly have far-reaching results on the stone-work of the walls and columns. The Egyptian Government is not indifferent to archæological considerations, and will do its utmost to avert disaster, but the prospect is not encouraging.

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Nearer home I hear that the old Plummer tower at Newcastle-on-Tyne, one of the few remaining parts of the old Edwardian wall of the city, is threatened. City and Borough Councils have much to answer for, and it is a thousand pities that priceless objects of antiquarian interest should be at the mercy of a set of ignorant men who care little and know nothing of the history of the things they sport with, and think only of utilitarian considerations. The City Fathers of York are playing with their ancient city walls and moats in order to provide work for the unemployed.

Fire, too, has been playing havoc with many old country houses during this autumn, and the destruction of historic paintings and objects of antiquarian value is deplorable. Enville House, the seat of the Countess of Stamford and Warrington, was destroyed recently. It contained some interesting relics of Lady Jane Grey.

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We have to deplore the approaching destruction of the old house at the corner of Minster Street and Broad Street. Some fanciful history has been woven about it, but there is no doubt about its being a fine example of 16th century domestic architecture. It has been sold for £10,000, and will be pulled down. The purchasers, however, have placed at the disposal of the Corporation of Reading any objects of antiquarian interest they would like to accept, and also gave an order that on the structure being pulled down any relics, or items of interest, which might be recovered, should be reserved for the same authorities of the town. Many of these objects will doubtless be placed in the keeping of the Berks Archæological Society for safe custody at the Abbey Gate.

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This is a very happy arrangement, and I hope that much may be found in the old house. Perhaps we shall find, as they found at Oswestry the other day, a small glazed jug, containing some 400 gold and silver coins, covering the reigns of Henry VIII. to Charles I. In this case the discovery was kept very dark, and the navvies who found the coins sold them for trifling sums to various collectors. The police then heard of the matter and set to work to recover them, and obtained a large proportion of them. Some of the buyers refused to give them up, and legal action is threatened against them. An interesting illustration of the law of treasure trove seems imminent, and the county coroner is about to hold an inquiry.

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During the autumn season the publishers have been very busy, and an immense number of books have been launched upon their adventurous voyages. They crowd upon each other in such close proximity that it is difficult for them all to live, and only a tithe of them is able to attract the notice of critics or the public, and to start upon their careers with favourable breezes. It would be far better if the production of books could be more evenly spread throughout the year, and not confined to the few busy months at its end.

Foremost amongst the books especially interesting to our readers is the volume on *Buckinghamshire*, in the "Little Guides Series," published by Messrs. Methuen and Co. It is from the pen of Mr. E. S. Roscoe, who knows the county well, and has written a book which all lovers of the county will thoroughly enjoy. It is based upon careful personal inspection and observation of the towns and villages of picturesque Buckinghamshire, and the historical information and architectural descriptions are accurate and reliable. The descriptions of the places are arranged in alphabetical order, and are necessarily succinct, but the author writes gracefully of the scenery of the county in the introduction, of its beautiful beechwoods, their green and stately trunks rising from a carpet of fallen leaves, at one season red, at another brown, unequalled in this magnificence. In his account of the Lace industry, the author might have referred to the beneficent action of the North Bucks Lace Association, which has done so much to revive the industry.

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Another Buckinghamshire book is the laborious and pains-taking work of Mr. J. W. Garrett-Pegge—a *Transcript of the first volume, 1538—1636, of the Parish Register of Chesham* (Elliot Stock). The historical value of such transcripts is inestimable, and all antiquaries should be grateful to those who set themselves to perform such Herculean tasks. The author tells again the story of the introduction of parish registers, how Thomas Cromwell conceived the idea from having seen the registers in the Low Countries, introduced there by the Spanish priests, and how baptismal registration was first started in Spain by Archbishop Ximenes. Chesham parish is an interesting one. It was a centre of local trade, and though somewhat secluded, had a large population, and manufactured leather goods, such as shoes, gloves, girdles, purses and cloth, wooden-ware, lace, etc. There were millers and maltsters, dyers, tanners and curriers, potters and tile-makers, besides the smiths, carpenters, and the like, who abounded in every village community. The registers seem to have been carefully written, and there are entries relating to several notable families, such as the Cavendishes, Sandys, Cheneys, and Ashfields. The ecclesiastical arrangements of the parish were peculiar. It had two vicars, the Abbeyes of Leicester and Woburn each appointing one. These vicars officiated in turn at the parish church. There were also four parsonage-houses or vicarages. It will be gathered, therefore, that the volume has many features of peculiar interest, in addition to the furnishing for the genealogist a rich store of inform-

tion with regard to many families. A very complete and accurate index renders the book particularly valuable. Some of the female names are peculiar—notably, Venice (? Venus), Jemime or Gemini, Philotheta, Zachariah, Bethjah, and Elkin.

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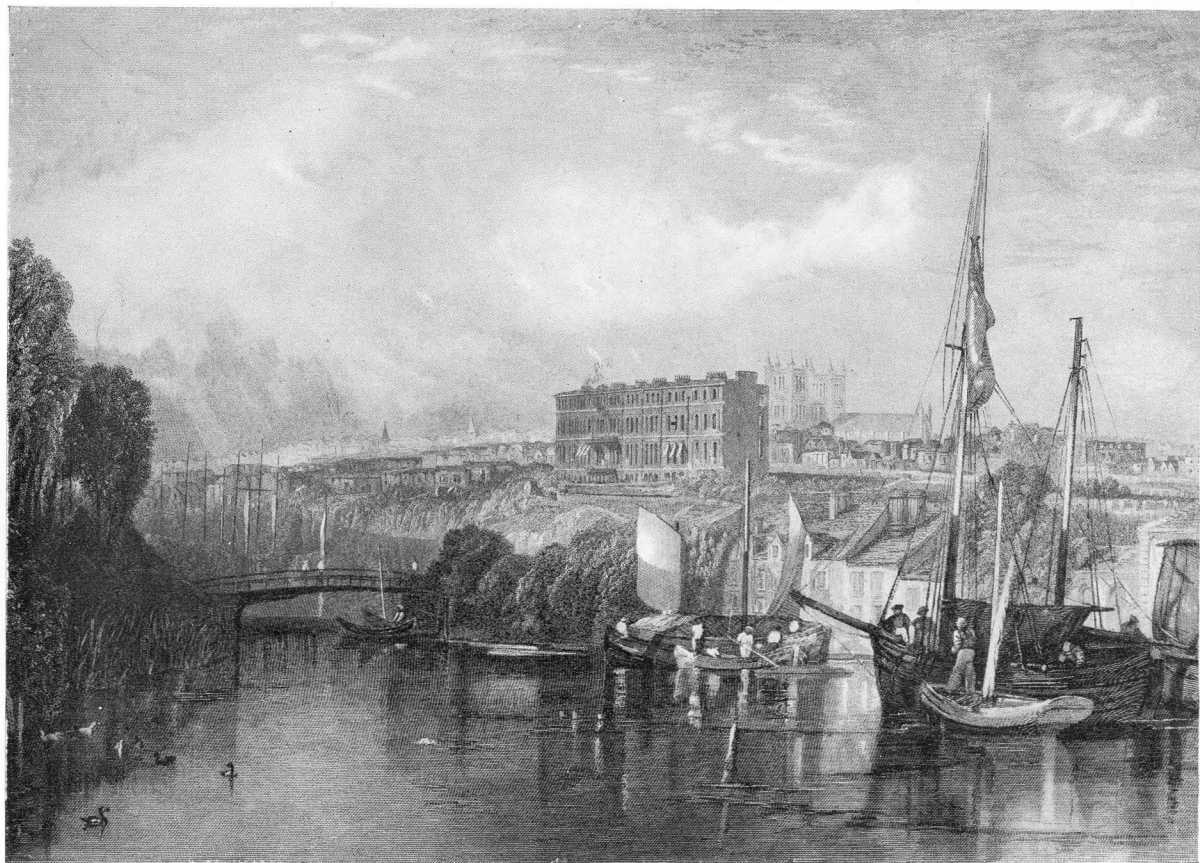
The “*Memorials of old County History Series*” grows apace, and two of these beautiful volumes have been adden to the list. These treat of Devonshire and Herefordshire. The former is edited by Mr. F. J. Snell, who is a great authority on the history of that interesting county and has written much concerning it, and the latter by the Rev. Compton Read, whose family is connected with Berkshire, having formerly lived at Barton Court, near Abingdon. I have not seen this book yet ; but the former is on my table, and is full of absorbing interest, and moreover, beautifully bound in red cloth, stamped with the arms of the county in gilt, and with white lettering. It is also enriched with numerous illustrations. It tells of the Royal Courtenays, the Grenvilles, a race of fighters, of bygone battles, illustrious men of Devon, Herrick and Prior, Peter Pindar, the Thersites of Kingsbridge, and much else that a Devonian will love to read. By the courtesy of the publishers, Messrs. Bemrose and Sons, I am enabled to give one of the illustrations, that of the City of Exeter, taken from Turner’s well-known beautiful drawing.

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Lovers of old gardens will unite with lovers of old books in praising the new volume of the Booklover’s Library, entitled *Gleanings in old garden literature*, by Mr. Carew Hazlitt (Elliot Stock.) We know how the wisest and best of mankind have delighted in gardens. Charles Lamb, Bacon, Evelyn, Sir William Temple, all loved their flowers, and very many authors have written of them, especially in recent years. Happily Mr. Hazlitt has confined himself to old garden literature, otherwise he might have filled many volumes. He has cast his net widely and drawn into it many books which have been long forgotten. I happen to possess a copy of the first regular treatise on gardens published in English. It was written by Thomas Hill in 1560, and is full of wise saws and envious recipes. When the rain is falling and in the depth of a dreary winter, true gardeners would like to read Mr. Hazlitt’s lively pages.

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Very appropriately on the eve of anniversary of Dr. Johnson’s death appeared an edition of his *Prayers and Meditations*, published



EXETER.

[From a Drawing by J. M. W. Turner.]

by Mr. E. Stock. The book gives a wonderfully striking revelation of the great man's inner life and character. It is prefaced by Mr. Birrell, and Mr. Higgins analyses with care and knowledge the religious side of Dr. Johnson's character. Few people ever think of him as a profoundly religious man. Yet such he was, as this book plainly shows. We think of him amid the hilarity of the tavern supper, the great controversialist, the convivial friend, the furious disputant. Here we see him in the privacy of his room, in his solitary communings with God and his own heart, as he humbles himself before the Throne of Grace, mourns over his vices and sins, his sloth and broken vows, while he prays for pardon and amendment. It is a wonderful book. Manly sincerity, child-like trust, and a passionate longing after goodness, breathe in every page.

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The Antiquary, after a quarter of a century of vigorous life, begins with the new year a new and enlarged series. I am so familiar with the old cover, with its lance and shield and sword and helmet, that I hardly recognised my old friend in its new dress. But he comes in goodly garb, and has a rare wallet on his back, containing much store of rich treasure which I shall love to dip into and discover much that I did not know. I wish my old friend a long lease of new life. He carries on his back Goldsmith's saying: "I love everything that's old, old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine." I agree with him. I love especially "old friends," amongst whom I count my friend *The Antiquary*. The Editor has formed an attractive programme, and the new series should commend itself to the public, even more favourably than it has during the last 25 years. I wish it most heartily every success.

Proceedings of Societies.

The winter session has found the Berks Archæological Society busily engaged in a series of lectures. On November 17th Mr. Petrocokino lectured before a large audience on his Experiences in South America, which were charmingly illustrated by lantern slides. His lecture was entitled "The land of the Incas." On December