

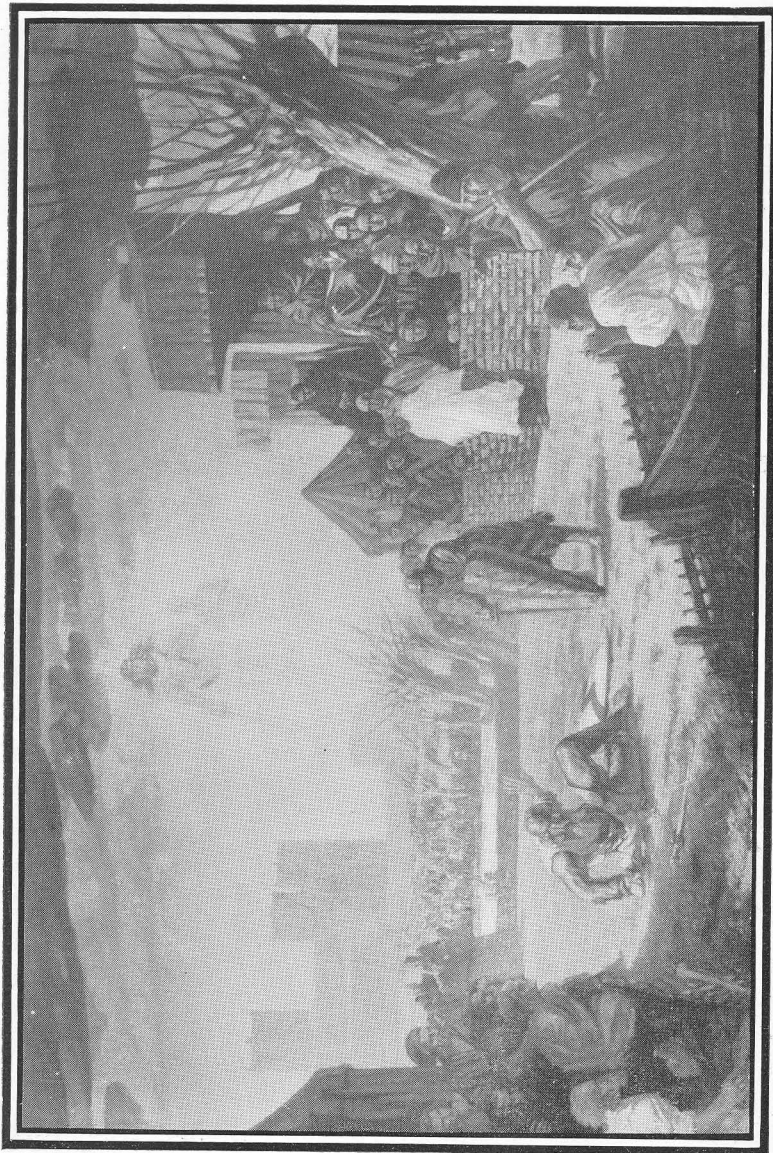
The Trial by Combat of Henry de Essex and Robert de Montfort at Reading Abbey.

THIS picture has recently been presented to the Reading Art Gallery by Dr. J. B. Hurry, who describes the event as follows:—The Picture, which has been painted by Mr. Harry Morley, A.R.C.A., represents a famous incident in the history of Reading Abbey, viz. the Trial by Combat of Henry de Essex and Robert de Montfort in the year 1163. The story is recorded in Jocelin de Brakelond's "Chronicle," and has been immortalised by Carlyle in his "Past and Present."

Trials by Combat, also known as Judicial Duels, were widely resorted to in the Middle Ages for the administration of justice, the issue being accepted as a *judicium Dei* in favour of the victor and in condemnation of the vanquished. At this particular trial the two combatants were Henry de Essex, the Royal Constable and Standard-bearer of King Henry II., and Robert de Montfort, who had charged Henry de Essex with treachery during the battle of Coleshill in the Welsh wars of Henry II. When the fight was at its hottest a cry was raised "The King is slain," when Essex threw down the Royal Standard, and well-nigh caused the defeat of the English Army.

At a Council held at Windsor the King decreed that the justice of the charge of treachery brought by Montfort against Essex should be settled by a Judicial Duel, which took place on April 8th, 1163, on the islet below Caversham Bridge (now known as De Montfort Island), in the presence of Henry II. and many nobles and other spectators. Unfortunately Essex, although held in high honour as one of the chief dignitaries of the realm, had a "flaw and crack" in his conscience. Some years before he had robbed the Church of the great King and Martyr St. Edmund. Worse still, he had imprisoned and starved to death an innocent knight, Gilbert de Cereville, on a false accusation of immorality brought by his (i.e. Essex's) wife.

At the outset of the duel the two combatants appear to have been fairly well matched, when suddenly the glorious martyr St. Edmund "in shining armour and as if hovering in the air" appeared to Essex, recalling his crimes and robbing him of all power of continuing the struggle. By the side of St. Edmund was Gilbert de



TRIAL BY COMBAT.

Cereville also "casting vengeful looks." At the sight of the apparition the conscience-stricken Essex fell to the ground vanquished and apparently dead. The body was carried by the monks into the Abbey where the wounded knight recovered. Eventually he joined the community, amongst whom "he strove to wipe out the stain of his former life, to cleanse the long week of dissolute history by at least a purifying Sabbath."

Notes and Queries

RELATING TO BERKS, BUCKS AND OXON.

Communications are invited upon all subjects of Antiquarian or Architectural interest relating to the three counties. Correspondents are requested to write as plainly as possible, on one side of the paper only, with REPLIES, QUERIES and NOTES on SEPARATE SHEETS, and the name of the writer appended to each communication.

THE Editors express the earnest hope that a larger number of Correspondents will avail themselves of these pages, and thus help those responsible for the publication of this Journal to extend its usefulness. There are several Queries—inserted in the Journals for 1917—still remaining unanswered. It is hoped that some readers may solve them.

Notes.

On February 4th, I came across in the Cottonian Library, Plymouth, three volumes of MS. Letters and Deeds relating to the estates of Wm. Archer, M.P. for Berkshire, ranging from 1725 to 1731.

Boxford	} Manors.
Welford	
Hoe Benham	
Easton	

If you know of anyone interested in those villages they might find them useful. I do not suppose many people are aware of their existence.—

G. A. KEMPTHORNE, Major, R.A.M.C.

Queries.

THE GARRAWAY FAMILY.—Some information is required concerning this family, which in the latter half of the 18th century was settled at Warfield, Winkfield, Hurst, Binfield and Sonning. I wish to know where George Garraway came from before he settled at Warfield and Winkfield.—R. GARRAWAY RISE, F.S.A., Carpenter's Hill, Pulborough, Sussex.