

## LOCAL HISTORY RECORDING SCHEME.

In this number of the Journal we publish an article on the Berkshire Branch of the Local History Recording Scheme, which is affiliated to the Berkshire Archæological Society, the Newbury District Field Club, the Reading and District Branch of the Historical Association, the Reading Literary and Scientific Society, the Berkshire Society of Architects and the Windsor and Eton Scientific and Archæological Society. Our readers will note that the article is from the pen of the Hon. Director of the scheme, Mr. C. B. Willcocks, to whose initiative and energy the project owes its origin and success. Not only has the Recording Scheme been well supported in our own County of Berkshire, but, as our readers will note, it has crossed the borders of our shire and taken root in neighbouring counties. We therefore trust all members of the Berkshire Archæological Society, as well as every reader of this Journal, will support the project by at once becoming a 'local correspondent.' Those who are willing to do this, and we hope they will be many, can obtain full details from the Hon. Secretary, Miss Maslen, University College, Reading.

## Mr. Slocock's Great Gift to the Reading Public Library

By A. L. HUMPHREYS, F.S.A.

Brief references have already appeared in the Press relating to the extensive and most valuable collection of local books, manuscripts and prints which has just been presented to the Reading Public Library through the munificence of Mr. A. E. O. Slocock, of Newbury. This is the most important gift ever received by the Public Library, and its significance demands that full and ample recognition should be given to it, and that tribute should be at once paid to the generosity of the donor.

All who are acquainted with Berkshire history in a general way, and with Newbury families specially, will be familiar with the name of Slocock. The family goes back in Berkshire his-

tory for some hundreds of years as one which bore arms and one which was identified with the best interests of the county. Richard Slocock was buried at Hampstead Marshall in the year 1666, and from him have descended a host of Slococks, many of whom have occupied high positions in the Church and in the Services, and others who have been notable in the higher commercial life of the county as bankers and brewers. A famous eighteenth century poet, the Rev. Thomas Penrose, whose father was Rector of Newbury, took for his wife Miss Mary Slocock. The Penroses and the Slococks followed careers of great usefulness for several generations after this, and obtained many university distinctions and honours. Notable among them was the Rev. Samuel Slocock, who, in 1812, was Rector of Wasing and afterwards of Shaw-cum-Donnington. Mr. A. E. O. Slocock, who is the donor of this great and magnificent local collection, is the son of the Rev. Oliver Edmund Slocock, who studied at Oxford, and was B.A. and M.A. of Pembroke College. He held various curacies, and eventually settled at Greenham, where he remained for nearly twenty years as vicar.

Mr. A. E. O. Slocock, his son, had himself a distinguished career at Oxford. He matriculated in 1882, and became scholar and M.A. of Merton College. The theory that the sons of the clergy break away from the quiet life of the homes where they have been brought up does not hold good in the case of Mr. Slocock. Both in his old home and at Merton he learned how to learn, and he became a student well versed in history, and devoted to the interests of the county in which he lived. The Englishman's love of his old home reveals itself in many pleasant ways. It makes the traveller in far regions feel homesick for a sight of his native land, and it often directs the lover of books to studies of local surroundings, making them units for the study of the whole history of the nation. He focuses upon his own neighbourhood and he gathers up old legends, follows the course of old roads, and collects books and manuscripts which in any way illustrate the history of the place in which he lives. It is a noble pursuit, the birth of which in a man's mind may alone be referred to the love of home which is deeply rooted in the breasts of all good citizens. At this point it is necessary to refer to another name which for a great many years has been deeply honoured in connection with Berkshire

history, and that name is Mr. Walter Money, F.S.A., a fine old veteran still active, learned in archæology and acquainted minutely with the vicissitudes of local family history. Mr. Money's book upon the History of Newbury fell into Mr. Slocock's hands soon after it was published, and not only so, but he formed a friendship with Mr. Money, and caught from him the fine enthusiasm of the experienced student, and became an ardent and discriminating collector of books, manuscripts and prints relating to the county.

It is exactly twenty years ago, in October and November, 1904, that two sales took place in the Corn Exchange at Newbury, which aroused wide interest. These were the sales of the library of Mr. Job Lousley, of Hampstead Norris. Mr. Lousley was not only a great Berkshire agriculturist, but he was as well a most ardent collector of local books. He visited all parts of the county and penetrated into all its shy corners, hoping to light upon items obscure or rare to add to his collection of books upon Berkshire. His zeal in research met with success, and he formed a collection remarkable for thoroughness and for containing many unique items. When his sales took place Mr. Slocock had the enterprise and foresight to secure many of the 'plums,' and in so doing he laid the foundation for the valuable collection he has now given to the Public Library of Reading. Having made so good a start, Mr. Slocock went on to gain fresh conquests, and when Mr. W. H. Dunn, of Walington, died, and his sale took place, some of the most valuable items passed into Mr. Slocock's possession. Among these was a fine set of aquatints of the market towns of Berkshire. One or two of this set of prints are already in the Art Gallery of Reading, but the whole lot now included in this great gift are in fine condition and the set is complete. Among Mr. Slocock's subsequent great acquisitions were his purchases of the chief Berkshire lots in the sale of the late Canon Benham's books and manuscripts, which took place in London in March, 1917. At this sale he purchased four large thick folio volumes containing principally manuscript matter, but also a large collection of playbills relating to the history of the drama in Berkshire, proclamations, pedigrees and a large assemblage of local Private Acts of Parliament. The manuscripts in the Benham collection include a number relating to Welford and to the Archer and the

Archer-Houblon family, who were resident there, and were among the original founders of the Bank of England. The whole of the Benham collection was got together in the first place a hundred years ago by a minister of Tadley called Benham, a relative of Canon Benham, who collected at a period when it was possible to secure items which are now priceless.

At the sale of Lord Craven's library a few years ago, Mr. Slocock secured a unique copy of Lysons' 'Berkshire,' extra illustrated with a fine collection of original drawings of places of interest in the county. These are not the work of any crude draughtsman, but are cleverly executed and reveal at once the work of an artist as well as an antiquary. The collection of books relating to the river Thames is extensive and has been got together regardless of cost. Many of the books on the Thames are lavishly illustrated and now rare. Mr. Slocock has succeeded in obtaining good copies of all the finely illustrated and vignetted books of the past as well as all the more recent books upon the Thames and its associations, historical and literary. It stands to reason that the pamphlets relating to the Civil War as it affected Berkshire and which were issued a few hours after the stirring events they recorded had happened are now very rare. Mr. Slocock has included several of them in his gift and some which relate directly to events in Reading in 1643, and also to other places affected by the Civil War, such as Faringdon and Abingdon. Reading items are numerous and include the manuscript inventory of the possessions of Elizabeth Burd, of Reading, in which Mr. Slocock's own direct ancestors are named. The whole document gives a curious picture of social life in Reading two hundred years ago. The books relating to Miss Mitford include all the best-known of her biographies and her own works in original editions. A remarkable manuscript which was originally in the vast collection amassed by Sir Thomas Phillipps and which now comes to Reading with this gift is a collection of historical notes upon Berkshire churches made by John Anstis, a skilful antiquary and well-known herald. The copy of Coates' History of Reading is on large paper and bound in handsome 'Roger Payne' style. It came from the library of a fastidious collector, the late Mr. George Dunn, of Woolley. Mr. Slocock has made an extensive collection of all the books relating to Windsor, both the

Castle and the town. His copies of Ashmole's 'Order of the Garter' are fine ones. Ashmole's books, now so rare, are in some cases in duplicate and triplicate.

It would be impossible to do justice to the catholicity which Mr. Slocock has shown and to his great vigilance in tracking down books which only wide knowledge would connect with the county and yet are those which have very definite links with Berkshire. A glance at the numerous obscure and out-of-the-way pamphlets will fully confirm this. I have written chiefly of books and manuscripts, but the prints are just as deserving of notice. There is an authenticated and original portrait of William Cobbett, painted when the great economist was at Newbury. There is a fine mezzotint of Stephen Hemsted, the famous doctor and sportsman, of Ilsley. The engraved portraits of Berkshire celebrities are numerous and include a number of well-known sportsmen, and the topographical illustrations form a collection as complete as has ever been put together. One unique item stands apart. It is a finely carved oak panel which once decorated Poughley Priory, near Chaddleworth, an Augustinian Monastery founded on the site of an ancient Hermitage. After some vicissitudes of ownership the panel was purchased by Mr. Slocock, and he has generously decided to include this valuable and interesting relic with the books and manuscripts. The town of Reading, and indeed the whole county, should at once realise the importance of this gift received through the munificence of Mr. Slocock, who has for twenty years silently pursued his hobby regardless of expense and for no selfish reasons, but solely that he could benefit scholars and those who take a pride in study and reconstructing the past of the county of Berkshire. The collection will be kept intact at the Public Library and will be known as 'The Slocock Collection.' It is hoped that a detailed catalogue will be issued.