

NOTABILIA MCMXI.

Membership of our Society shows a slight increase during the year, but so slight as to be disappointing in view of our financial position. It is, of course, the Museum which causes the drain on our slender resources, and it is rather hard to understand why this should not receive more support from the county at large. To be without a county museum would certainly be a reproach to Buckinghamshire.

The foundations of a Roman Villa in the neighbourhood of Hambleton have been partly uncovered and are now protected for the winter. Work will be resumed and plans made as soon as the weather and farming operations admit of it. Mr. Cocks and Professor Haverfield have the matter in hand.

Our member Mr. Thurlow, discovered in April some painted wall decoration in the upper chamber of a house on the main road at Temple End, High Wycombe. The house which has been subdivided, is of no older date than the end of the 17th century, the chief feature of the front being a bold block cornice. In preparing the house for a new tenant, and stripping this room, on the first floor, of numerous wall papers, it was found that the walls had originally been decorated by paintings in distemper. A description of these was given by "Sigma" in the *Bucks Herald* of April 29th which admits of some little correction. The scheme, which was carried round three sides of the room, consisted of decorations "en grisaille" enclosing panels in colour of figure subjects, chiefly female, not family portraits as suggested by "Sigma," but personifications—as regards four of them—of Prudentia, Temperantia, Justitia, and Fortitudo, one or two of which were quite recognisable though greatly obliterated. There seemed to have been either eight or nine panels, the subjects of the others, according to seventeenth century precedent, of which these paintings seem to have been a late survival, might have been the four Elements, or Mars and Diana might have been included. There was a continuous dado

with geometrical ornament and broken by pedestals supporting Corinthian columns, which carried a continuous entablature, the cornice of which only was worked in wood, all the other architectonic decoration being a simulation of relief. Between the columns arches framed the paintings. Mr. Thurlow could not persuade the new tenant to allow this interesting decoration to appear, and it was promptly covered with paper. Unfortunately also, photographs which were attempted proved failures.

On Sunday morning, March 26th last, fire broke out in the roof of Honiton Church, and spread till the building was gutted, and one of the finest Devon rood-screens reduced to ashes.

What it was, and what our loss is, may be seen by a reference to the views of it in "Country Life" of Ap. 22, 1911, from photographs which had happily been taken in 1908. This fine screen, like most of those in that county, was of Tudor date, and of admirable execution. Above the cone of the loft was a sumptuously carved cornice. There was no structural division between nave and chancel, but this handsome screen took the place of it, and was carried right across the transept to a length of about 45 feet.

The reader is referred to Mr. F. Bligh Bond's book on church screens, which was reviewed in RECORDS, IX, 388, for notes on it and illustration. The screen had been slightly raised in modern times, the original level of the sill of the upper stair doorway opening on to the floor of the loft having been about 10 feet. The stair was approached from within the north chapel. This screen, like all others that had been completed, had been decorated in gold and colours; but in 1732 it was "beautified," that is to say it was painted white, with marbling in blue. In 1880 it was decided to get rid of this marbling, and this was done most effectually, not to say ignorantly, for the "pickle" not only removed the marbling, but all trace of the Tudor decoration beneath it.

The establishment of a museum for London is an event of the year which should interest not only Lon-

doners, but all who take an interest in the history of the great capital of their country. King Edward, who knew his Paris well, had long wished for a museum which should be for London what the Musée Carnavalet is for Paris. There was a proposal, which fell through, that a museum of the kind should be founded as a memorial to him. Queen Alexandra and the present King and Queen have given practical proof of their interest in the project which has now been successfully started, the collections having been housed in Kensington Palace.

Mr. Guy Laking has been appointed Keeper and Secretary, and he believes that "it will be a great advantage to have a centre where students and others who desire to enquire into the life in London at various periods may find collected all the available material." Presumably other museums will contribute objects, prints, etc., specially referring to London, so as to make this as completely illustrative as possible of London's life, industries, habits, fashions, and even follies. No doubt a complete topographical library for London and its suburbs will be one of the objects aimed at.

It is hard to speak with any patience of what has taken place this year at Tattershall Castle—Wayne-flete's Tower. It is a most interesting historical monument, both as marking the transition from the really fortified castle, which should stand a siege, to the more domestic mansion, and also as an instance of the early use of brick as the prevailing material. It was built by Lord Treasurer Cromwell, between 1433 and 1455. The ridiculous idea seems to have been entertained of removing the whole building to the United States of America. The vendor stated that he had offered the whole place, including the very fine chimney-pieces, to the National Trust for £2,000, declining their offer of £1,500. The chimney-pieces were afterwards removed to London, and much damaged in the process, and a dealer there was stated to be asking £2,800 for them. The latest news is that the despoiled building has now been purchased by Earl Curzon to save it from further deprecation.