

NORTH MARSTON.

THE LEGEND OF MASTER JOHN SHORNE.

“ Sir John Shorne
Gentleman born
Conjured the Devil into a boot.”

This Legend about which so much has been written may I think be better explained by an enquiry into the meaning of the ancient phrases used, rather than by any reference to rude paintings or fragments of stained glass. To read it as of a practical occurrence must of course be sheer nonsense, and any relic or representation of Sir John forcing the devil into a boot (a covering for the leg) can only lead to a further misunderstanding of the original meaning.

To conjure may be read to summons in a sacred name; to enjoin with the highest solemnity. “ The Church may address her sons in the form St. Paul does the Phillippians, when he *conjures* them to piety.”—‘ Decay of piety.’

To conjure, however, may be to practice charms or enchantments; to enchant—

Out! Out! Out! I’ll *conjure* you—I’ll fortunetell you.—*Shakespeare.*

We have our choice in the Legend as to where the accent may be placed.

If we renounce “ boot” as a covering for the leg, and read it as “ bote” or “ boot,” a bargain, we shall be in a better position to unravel the mystery. Bote or boot may be understood as recompence; repentance or fine paid by way of expiation, or to enrich or benefit—

“ I’ll give you boot—I’ll give you three for one.”—*Shakespeare.*

We read of booting or boting corn. The tenants of Haddenham Manor, in this County, formerly paid booting—corn to the Prior of Rochester. It is thought to have been so called from being paid by the tenants by way of bote, or boot, viz.—a compensation to the Lord for his granting them leases, &c.

The term “ devil” may have been an opprobrious name used towards some personal enemy of Sir John’s, or an oppresser of the Church or parish to which he belonged, or the Legend may have been framed to commemorate a good bargain made by Sir John, or a victory over any opponent.

ROBERT GIBBS.

Aylesbury, Feb. 10th, 1863,

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