



The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

Gossip of an Antiquary.

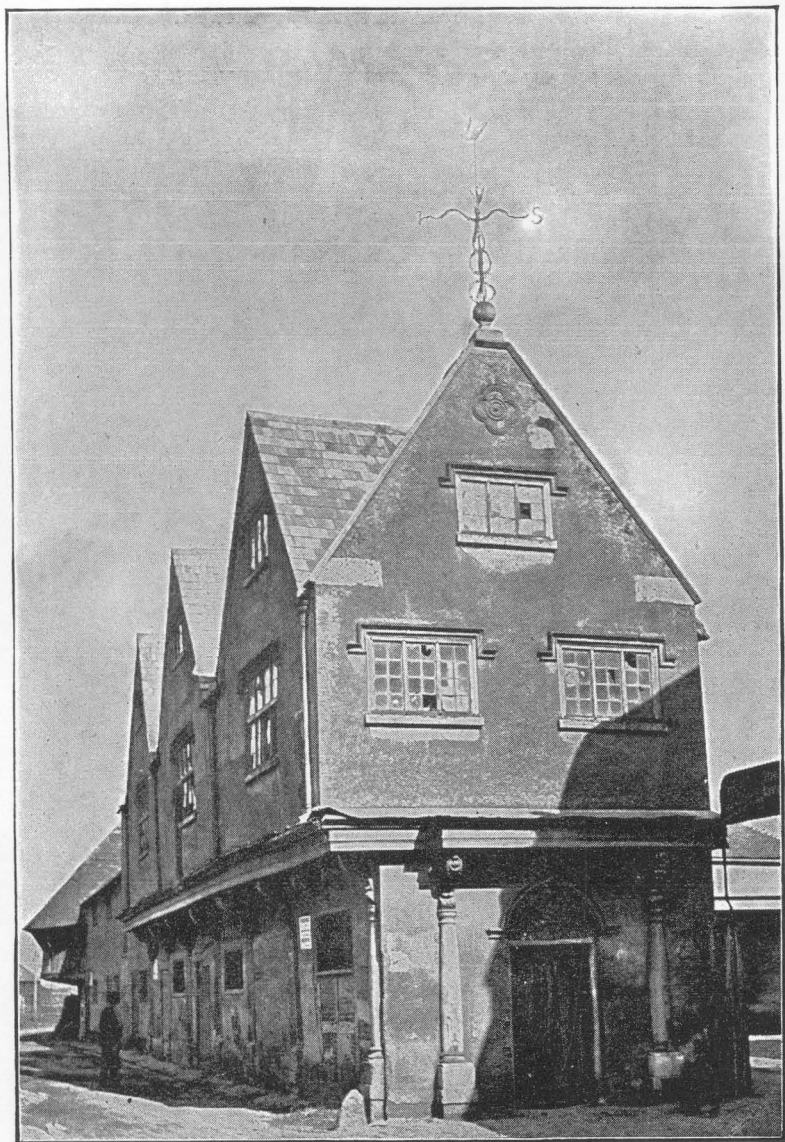
OUR eighth volume commences with this number ; and a very definite object lies before our readers, and that is to amass material for the forthcoming Victoria County History of Berkshire. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire will soon be included in this important series ; but the arrangements for Berkshire are in progress, and the first volume is in course of completion. The Topographical Section is, of course, the heaviest and most important undertaking, and I trust that many willing helpers will offer assistance to the Editor, and enable him to do justice to the history of the Royal County. Mr. Ditchfield tells me that he will be very glad to hear from those who are willing to give some personal assistance in this important work.

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The Hon. Greene Kendrick has been prevented from contributing his promised paper on the history of his family in Berkshire for this number of the Journal, but proposes to publish his researches in the July number. I am very glad to hear that his collection of books and manuscripts happily escaped destruction in the disastrous fire which raged a few weeks ago in Waterbury, U.S.A.

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An illustration appears in this number of the old Cloth Hall, Newbury, which is about to be restored by the energy of the inhabitants and their friends in the county. Already £1,535 has



OLD CLOTH HALL, NEWBURY.

been promised, so that this admirable project is in progress of completion, only about £300 being now required. This Cloth Hall was erected in the latter part of the 16th century, and is traditionally supposed to have been built by the clothworkers of Newbury for their own use. At that period the town was one of the largest seats of the clothing manufacture in the kingdom. John Winchcombe, better known as "Jack of Newbury," and Thomas Dolman were some of the famous clothiers of the time, and for much information concerning the Guild of Weavers I refer the reader to an excellent pamphlet written by Mr. Walter Money.

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Last month there appeared the first number of a new monthly which bears the attractive title *The Country*, and the general opinion is that the Magazine has made a very promising start. People may be leaving the country in larger numbers now than they ever did before; the rural exodus is a very real and appalling danger; but the interest in all that pertains to the country, and especially to its most attractive sides, has grown enormously, and the demand for such periodicals is likely to increase. The Editor wisely aims at touching rural life at many points, and no complaints can be made of lack of variety in its pages. Angling, gardening, dogs and their owners, wild life in Britain, hunting, and many other subjects, are treated of in this first number which abounds with excellent illustrations, and the success of this magazine should be assured.

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Many of Mr. Barnard's friends in Berkshire who remember him when he was the Head-master of Reading School, will be glad to read a very interesting volume which he has edited, entitled *A Companion to English History* in the Middle Ages. It is published by the Clarendon Press, and treats in a masterly way of Architecture, Costumes, Heraldry, Shipping, Town Life, Country Life, Monasticism, Art, and the thousand and one things which we all want to know about.

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Describing the heralds' visitations which disappeared with the last Stuart King, Mr. F. P. Barnard explains that all persons below the baronage who used coat-armour or styled themselves esquires or gentlemen, were summoned to prove their right thereto. "The arms and descents submitted were accepted and recorded, or 'respited for proof,' or 'disallowed.' New families might apply for and, if suitable, receive grants of arms. Usurpers of armorial bearings

or of the title of esquire or dignity of gentleman were forced to 'disclaim' by signing a declaration that they were not gentlemen, or they were disclaimed as such at the Assizes or Quarter Sessions, and the local officials were forbidden so to address them. They were further made 'infamous' by having their names and false pretensions proclaimed by the public crier and posted up in the market-place nearest to their homes . . . While impostors were in this way weeded out, there is no doubt that, rather than pay the heralds' fees, heads of families of unquestionable armorial position frequently disclaimed : an act which would not injure them locally where their true estate was well known." Mr. Barnard notes that "in attempting to bar the social aspirations of the *nouveau riche* heraldry was swamped by him." . . .

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The chapter on the country life of the people is well worthy of perusal, and herein is given some account of the games and sports fashionable in that period. Football, we are told, which is heard of as early as the time of Edward III., was exceedingly popular, but not always approved by peaceable citizens. This was natural, as it was often played in the streets, "breaking men's windows, and committing other great enormities." Davenant, in 1634, declares it "not very civile" in the narrow roads of London, and the Kingston tradesmen put up their shutters when it was played. The kindred game of *hurling* (a rudimentary Rugby game) in one form required two or three miles of country, and the goals were often ponds, in which ball and players plunged together, "scrambling and scratching." *Campball*, another variety, was described as a "friendlie fyghte," and perhaps James I. was not wrong when he condemned football as "meeter for lameing than making able." But in this as in other respects, James was a degenerate Scot. *Stoolball*, a game for girls—Herrick played it with Lucia for sugar-cakes and wine—has given us cricket. *Pall Mall* was a fashionable game in the seventeenth century. Cotgrave tells us that it was played in an alley, and the object was to strike a round boxball with a mallet through a high arch of iron. *Cambuc* is described by Strutt as a sort of golf, but was more probably hockey; anyhow, Edward III. found it wise to forbid it as a waste of time. The lower orders indulged in many varieties of bowls and quoits named *kails*, *closh*, *loggats*, *Dutch pins*, and others. Since none below the rank of gentleman could tilt at a tournament, the populace mimicked their sport by running at the *Quintain*.

Reading can now boast of its College, which aspires to great things and vaunts itself not a little. If the authorities had only lived in the reign of King John they might have availed themselves of a certain migration from Oxford, and Reading University might have rivalled Oxford or Cambridge. Here is an account of the affair, which may not be altogether pleasing to Cambridge men :—
 “The University of Cambridge originated through a migration from Oxford. In 1209, an Oxford townsman was killed by a clerk ; whether accidentally or not, we do not know. King John, who was under sentence of excommunication, and so had no desire to protect the clergy, allowed the people of Oxford to have their revenge by putting two or three scholars to death. Their fellow students became alarmed, and began to migrate, some to Paris, some to Reading, and some to Cambridge. There is no evidence that Cambridge had acquired any special pre-eminence as an educational centre before the beginning of the thirteenth century. No doubt it possessed one of the grammar schools which, by this time, were to be found in most English towns. The rise of Cambridge received a check from the return of scholars to Oxford in 1214, on John’s reconciliation with the Church, but it had, some fifteen years later, an accession of strength from the dispersion of the scholars of Paris. The distinguishing mark of the English Universities to-day is the collegiate system. Yet Paris, not Oxford, was the original home of the college as an academic institution.”

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Many of us enjoyed hearing the able lecture delivered by the Rev. E. A. Goddard on the Church Plate of Wilts, which may possibly stir up our local antiquaries to fresh endeavours. The Inventory of the Berkshire Church Plate was begun some years ago by Mr. Dasent and the Rev. E. R. Gardiner ; but, unfortunately, it was left in an unfinished condition. I hope some enthusiastic antiquary will take the matter up and continue that which was so well begun.

HURLEY—AN OLD VESTRY BOOK.—At the Easter Vestry this year, a new Church account book appeared for the first time, in replacement of an Old Book which had been in continuous use at Hurley Vestries in four different centuries. The accounts contained in it date from May 21st, 1698, to April 9th, 1901. In 1892, I compiled a complete list of Hurley Churchwardens from 1699 to 1892, made out entirely from this old book. This list, framed and glazed, now hangs on one of the walls of Hurley Church.—F. T. WETHERED.