

**WILLIS'S CURRENT NOTES: A SERIES OF
ARTICLES ON ANTIQUITIES, BIOGRAPHY,
HERALDRY, HISTORY, LANGUAGES,
LITERATURE, NATURAL HISTORY,
TOPOGRAPHY, CURIOUS CUSTOMS, &C.**

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Willis's Current Notes: A Series of Articles on Antiquities, Biography, Heraldry, History, Languages, Literature, Natural History, Topography, Curious Customs, &C. by George Willis

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GEORGE WILLIS

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A SERIES OF ARTICLES

ON

Antiquities, Biography, Heraldry, History, Languages,
Literature, Natural History, Curious Customs, &c.,

SELECTED FROM

ORIGINAL LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

ADDRESSED DURING THE YEAR

1855,

TO THE PUBLISHER,

GEORGE WILLIS,

GREAT PIAZZA, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON.

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WILLIS'S CURRENT NOTES.

No. XLIX.]

"Takes note of what is done—
By note, to give and to receive."—SHAKESPEARE.

[JANUARY, 1855.]

PAINTER'S PALACE OF PLEASURE.

SHAKESPEARE borrowed largely from this rich storehouse of "Pleasant Histories and Excellent Novels, Tragicall Matters, and other morall Argument," for the plots of his dramas, or the enrichment of his incidents; and there are few books in early English literature, so attractive in their import, or more difficult to obtain in a clean, sound, and unexceptionable condition than the volumes under notice.

A circumstance which adds to its rarity, and consequently the difficulty of obtaining the two volumes, either together, or in a co-equal condition, is the fact that each were printed at separate times. The first was printed in 1566, again in 1569, and again in 1575. The second in 1567, and again in 1580, but the title is not dated. The Harleian copy, which is noticed in Oldys' Catalogue of that superb, nay, national library, after it was purchased by Thomas Osborne, at Gray's Inn Gate, for 13,000*l.*, a much less sum than had been expended on the binding of a portion, was formed of the editions, vol. I. 1575, and vol. II. 1567. See Catalogue, 1744, vol. III., Romances and Novels, numb. 6375. The binding red morocco, with richly tooled corners.

Whether Mr. Hans Stanley was then purchaser or not, does not appear, but he presented the work to the immortal Garrick, with these lines inscribed on the fly-leaf of the first volume—

From these dark Legends of a barbarous age,
The self-taught SHAKESPEARE drew his Tragic page,
From each faint portrait, each imperfect line,
He traced Othello, Juliet, Cymbeline;
His wilder muse succeeding critics fail'd,
Fruitless their author to explain they toil'd.

'Twas thine, O GARRICK, in each lofty part,
To write a comment in the anxious heart;
By skilful accent, gesture, voice, and mien,
To show the beauties of each rapt'rous scene,
What he to Cynthio, or to Boccace ow'd,
Thy buskin on the British bard bestow'd.

Below these dedicatory lines, Garrick, thus highly complimented, wrote—

The above lines were written by Mr. Hans Stanley, who gave me this book. D. G.

Upon Mrs. Garrick's decease, the library of her husband was dispersed by public auction, when this copy was purchased by Mr. Jolley for 28*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*, and on the 16th inst. was, in the last day's sale of his books, purchased by Mr. Lilly for 18*l.*

VOL. V.

VERITAS TEMPORIS FILIA.

YOUR Correspondent, M. R. C., asks why Queen Mary the First adopted this motto as a legend on her coins, adding that it was one "to which Mary at no period of her life was entitled." It must not be assumed that the Sovereign ever suggests a legend for the coinage, on the contrary, she, or he, merely approves or rejects what the Master of the Mint, or the designer of the medal, under the sanction of the Lords of the Treasury, may have proposed. The legend on the shillings of her predecessor, King Edward the Sixth, is *TIMOR DOMINI FONVS VITÆ*, the family motto of the Butlers, Earls of Dunboync; and the present Earl informed the writer that one of his ancestors was Master of the Mint in the reign of that Prince, and as a record of the fact placed his own motto on the coinage. May not that of Queen Mary have had some similar origin? It is much the fashion to imagine a Popish origin for every event of Mary's reign, and Mr. Hawkins, in his *Silver Coins of England*, ventures on this conjectural explanation: "The motto was adopted by the persuasion of her Romish clergy in allusion to her endeavours to restore the abominations of Popery, which had been in a great degree suppressed by her predecessors." B. N.

The inconsistency of this assertion will be apparent in reverting to facts. Sir James Butler, who married Joan, daughter of Pierce Butler, Earl of Ormonde, died in Jan. 1533, leaving Edmund his son and heir, ennobled in 1541 by King Henry the Eighth, as Baron Dunboync. It is true, the armorial motto appears to be *TIMOR DOMINI FONVS VITÆ*, and that legend is attached to the shillings of King Edward the Sixth, from 1547 to 1551, but not the slightest evidence is to be found that connects Lord Dunboync with the mint affairs of either monarch, in England or Ireland, in which latter country he seems to have been a resident, and married Julia, who after a month's marriage, was the widow of Gerald 'the red haired,' fifteenth Baron Kerry killed in Desmond, August 1, 1530. Edward, Baron Dunboync, was deceased in 1596.

The legend on the shillings of Edward the Sixth was derived from the Vulgate version of the Bible, *Proverbe*, xiv. 27. The editions by Henry Stephens, of Paris, being then very popular among the Reformers.—Ed.

POPE'S SKULL has the animal passions strongly developed, nor are the organs of veneration or benevolence very prominent; it is, however, devoid of what is vulgarly designated "bumps and lumps," and is singularly pre-eminent for the harmonised disposition of leading characteristics. The operation of the brain upon the skull evinces indisputably how active while living were the poet's exercise of ideality and the reflective powers. January 10. J. D. H.

SHAKESPEARE AND CAMDEN SOCIETIES.

IN Current Notes, 1852, pp. 31, 39, were notices of the termination of the Percy Society, and the final adjustment of its pecuniary affairs, honourable to all parties by whom they had been conducted.

There are, or were, two other similar Societies; the Shakespeare Society and the Camden Society, concerning which little *officially* has been heard recently, so as to learn whether they are defunct, or only in a state of suspended animation. As regards the Shakespeare, it has certainly been stated in several booksellers' catalogues that it is closed, and the stock of books and the Shakespeare portraits sold off; but I am not aware that any announcement of such being the case, has been officially made, or any account of the funds furnished to the members.

It would be satisfactory to the subscribers to receive any information or explanation regarding these matters, through the medium of your useful and entertaining Current Notes.

F. R. A.

The SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY ceased at the close of 1853; the reason stated, that the Honorary Officials were desirous of retiring. In March 1854, the entire stock of the works, printed at the expense of the members, was sold by public auction for about 460*l.*, the disposal, to Mr. Skeffington, of the remaining impressions of the Elzeviers Shakespeare portrait was a private arrangement. No official account of the affairs of the Society, or its termination, has been prepared for the members, nor does it, on enquiry, appear that any such statement is contemplated.

Our Correspondent may rest assured hopes are entertained, that the CAMDEN SOCIETY is about recovering from its supposed state of suspended animation, by the following signs. During 1854, the members have received the "Letters of Lady Brilliana Harley," and the first part of "Dr. Swinford's Household Roll." Some Extracts from Grants temp. Edward the Fifth, are promised during this month, January 1855; and also, the Report of the Council elected May 2, 1853, with the report of the Auditors upon the Society's receipts and expenditure "from the 1st of April, 1853, to the 31st March, 1854."

The Camden Society appears to have lost of its phalanx of members, nearly one half. It is lamentable to reflect, how perverted have been the means and resources of this once leading and embodied power of deservedly distinguished men of all professions. Had the subscriptions and the labours of the members, looted as they were and are in all the counties, been devoted to the enlargement and reconstruction of Camden's Britannia, they would have conferred special honour on the name of the Historian whose celebrity they usurped to emblazon a notoriety which they have but faintly attempted to maintain. Such a work would have resulted in establishing an eternal national monument, and created a halo of imperishable glory on the Society; or, had that been deemed too much, a republication of Horsley's Britannia Romana, with additions based upon the annotated copies, by Professor Ward and others, in the British Museum Library, would really have rendered an important service in aid of Historical Literature, while on the contrary, many of their distributed emanations are found on book-stalls neglected and unheeded, a memorable memento of the mischiefs of inefficient or misdirected talent, and ample pecuniary means.

PHENICIAN PALEOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE.

ON the observations of the Editor, who appears to lean to the general opinions of Oriental scholars, on the subject of Paleography and Phœnician literature, but on which a volume might be written; attached to the article in Current Notes, vol. iii, p. 73, I proffer the following remarks:—

First, Herodotus says the Phœnicians came as colonists to the Syrian coasts from the Erythraean seas. Strabo, that they came from the Persian gulf. Vallancey, that the Phœnicians and the Persians were of the same family; and as to the language called Phœnician, I can assert it was used over a much wider extent of country than was occupied by the Arabians and Persians. In this language, which in fact resembles the Chinese, in its almost total absence of grammatical inflections, are written those ancient remains which have of late caused considerable sensation throughout the literary world, viz., the cuneiform monuments of Babylon, Nineveh, Persepolis, and Behistan. On the north part of the pillar of Alahabad, we find, in a character not as yet deciphered, as I am aware by any but myself, a history which appears to be an account of the deluge, and describing the spot where Noah was buried. See Asiatic Researches, vol. vii, p. 180, pl. 6. All these writings are to be read from left to right. May not this Phœnician language, this older dialect of the Arabic have been almost universal in the days of Heber? Again, may it not have been remodelled about six hundred years after, in the days of Ishmael, to somewhat in its present form?

Secondly, Gesenius in his Monumenta Phœnicia, has numerous specimens of this language; and the Sinaic Valley has supplied 178 inscriptions in the same language. See Trans. of Royal Society of Literature, vol. ii, part 1, plates. In these inscriptions, written some before, and others soon after the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, one word occurs more than one hundred and forty times, a sufficient evidence to prove that for the most part, I speak cautiously, and think I may say altogether, Phœnician inscriptions must be read from left to right. The one word alluded to is in numb. 142. *𐤀𐤁𐤁* s^{na}, Mount Sina. The first letter is the Hebrew, *samech*, or *s*; the second is the Syriac and Arabic, *nun* or *n*; and the third, is the Samaritan and Runic *alph*, or *a*; sometimes the letters are joined as in numb. 2, where it occurs three times; and at others, the letters are somewhat altered in form, but always distinguishable, even to a tyro. Surely, this word proves that all the sentences must be read from *left to right*; and also, that the writing is made up of MIXED ALPHABETS.

Thirdly, I have a printed copy of the Magni Atlantis et submersæ Atlantis Reliquiem, called Phœnician, but which I think to be Runic. The heading "Atlas," is from right to left, but the narrative is alternately up and down, in eighteen lines of two feet one inch in length. This professes to have been written seven hundred years after the deluge, which it describes in most poetical language, and in which are mentioned as

situated in the mountain passes of the Atlantic range, inns for the refreshment and rest of travellers. The writing on this Atlantic monument has been considered to be "pseudophaenicia et spuria," but those, who with the late E. H. Barker, considered it as a forgery, knew not how to decypher it. See Gesenii Scripturæ Linguæque Phœnicis, cap. ix., where the first sign on the right hand at the lower end of the inscription, being a hieroglyph, is read as a letter, and some few of the letters themselves not being understood, no sense has been made of the whole inscription, but its internal evidence is quite sufficient to prove it *not a forgery*.

Southwick, near Oundle, Jan. 15. T. R. BROWN.

MISQUOTATION.—Butler makes the knight while reasoning with his lady love, observe,

For what is worth in any thing,
But so much money as 'twill bring?

Hudibras, Part II. Canto i., Edit. 1678, p. 210.

This couplet has since undergone a slight change,

For what's the worth of any thing,
But so much money as 'twill bring.

Athenian Sport, 1784, Bro. p. 164.

But a more recent adaptation in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sept. 1854, p. 262, exhibits a phraseology widely differing from the original.

The value of a thing
Be just so much as it will bring.
Dublin, Jan. 1.

A. S.

ABUSES IN THE ARMY.

Cradock, in his *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 171, referring to Lord Chancellor Erskine, says, "Erskine sent me his pamphlet on the Abuses of the Army, and we afterwards examined together his Remarks on Annuities, they were both printed by Tom Davies of Russell Street, Covent Garden."

These productions of the noble author do not seem to be known, at least they are not to me; but, as it is pretty well known that abuses in the army have not ceased to exist, it would be curious to see whether they in any way differ from those which engaged the attention of Erskine, and I shall be glad if you, or any of your readers, will furnish some information on the subject.

F. R. A.

AMBRY AND EFFIGY IN AIRLIE KIRK.

THE Ambry, *scot.*, almerie, or almorie, a recess in churches for depositing the arms for the poor, is of considerable antiquity. Du Cange defines it "the Cœpe-hus of Elfrie; a cupboard, storehouse, cabinet, etc." in that sense, closets, or presses, for containing food and articles for domestic uses are generally known. Every church or chapel in the days of Papal domination, had its ambry; and were frequently hewn from one stone,

having in front, by way of security, a wooden door, with iron hinges and bolts. A few of these ambries are still found about the remains of old kirks, vestiges which very laudably have been preserved long after the old fanes were demolished; but none of those in the counties of Angus or Mearns, present a better representation of the old ambry than that at Airlie, which is built into the porch on the west side of the parish kirk, situated in the south-western part of Angus.



The front, decorated with the sculptured denotations of the five Passion wounds of Christ, shows by the broken moulding, the former sockets for the embedding of the iron fastenings. On the wall within, cut into the stone, are the initials *a. f.* with three crescents, the armorial bearings of the family of Fenton, originally from the border, but who were the lords of the lands and barony of Baikie, in the parish of Airlie, in 1291, if not before, and were extinct in the male line about the middle of the fifteenth century.*

Possibly the ambry was made at the expense of one of the lords of Baikie; or, during the incumbency of one of the family, as parson of this kirk, the initials and arms being intended to denote the period.

The same symbols of our Lord's Passion, represented on the ambry, are also found on the coping stone of an old burying aisle, with the addition of the Scourge, the pillar to which Christ was bound, holy lance, and the pincers; with carvings of the fleur-de-lis, surmounted by a coronet. These, I infer, from their superior delicacy of execution, are of later date to the emblems on the front of the ambry. The coping stone is said to have

* Nisbet, referring to Haddington's Collections from the Registers, describes the arms of Fenton of Baikie, *arg.* three crescents, *gules*. William Fenton, Lord Baikie, is so designated in a perambulation with Alexander Ogilvie, Sheriff of Angus, in 1410. By their arms in our old registers being *arg.* three crescents *gules*, Fenton of Ogilvie, Fenton of Carden, and Fenton of Kelly, were cadets of Fenton of Baikie. *System of Heraldry*, edit. 1804, vol. i. p. 92.

been taken from the old kirk, which was demolished in 1783.

Boilt into the west gable of the kirk is a gaunt human effigy, about three feet in height, but much mutilated. The writer of the *New Statistical Account of the Parish, 1843*, describes it as a representation of St. John the Baptist, to whom, he adds, the church was originally dedicated. The idea is certainly erroneous, for apart from a small hamlet of houses, with a fine spring and knoll, close to the kirk, known by the name of St. Madden, there is extant in the charter-chest at Cortachy Castle, a document bearing date 1447, in which mention is made of "the bell of the Kirk of St. Madden of Airlie,"* and he doubtless was the patron saint of the kirk. His festival is held on May 17, and as he is specially said to have devoted certain days to the celebration of the Eucharist and the Passion of Christ, the emblems on the ambry and coping-stone have most probably reference to that tradition. It may, however, be noticed, though the parish kirk was dedicated to St. Madden, there was formerly, about a mile to the south-west a chapel, which had for its patron saint, St. John, and to which William de Fenton, in 1382, presented the adjoining lands of Lunross;† yet to this, the statue cannot by the most distant probability have any reference.

No description, or print of ancient armour, known to the writer, represents the peculiarly observable in the singularly formed apron of plate mail, as shown on this



figure. The carving appears to indicate scale armour, small round plates of iron, lapping one over the other like fish scales, and terminating in a point, to which is pendant an oval or heart-shaped ornament. Some Correspondent of *Current Notes* may possibly be able to explain this curious appendage of old costume. The animal on the book is possibly intended to represent a lamb; hence, it may be inferred, the fore finger of the right hand points to "the Lamb's book of life," an allegory not unworthy of a much later time than that to which the statue appears to belong.

The Fenton estate in the fifteenth century became the property of the younger sons of Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, and Halkett of Pitfirran. Baikie Castle stood on a rising ground, near the west side of the loch of Baikie, but has long been demolished, and a new mansion, a little to the south, erected some years since. Brechin. A. J.

Men often make others unfaithful by thinking them so.—*Seneca*.

* Spalding Club Miscellany, vol. iv. p. 118.

† Reg. Mag. Sigilli, p. 25.

PAISLEY BLACK BOOK.

CAN any of the readers of *Current Notes* furnish particulars as to the authorship, contents, and present place of deposit of this book? It is not mentioned under the head of "Paisley" in Bishop Nicolson's Historical Library, Macray's *Manual of British Historians*, or in the *Cottonian, Harleian, or Lansdowne Catalogues*.

Ashton-under-Lyne, Jan. 13.

J. R. C.

Refer to Crawford's *History of the Shire of Renfrew*, first printed in 1710, continued by William Semple, printed at Paisley, 1782, 4to. p. 281, where it is said, "the monks of the abbey of Paisley wrote a Chronicle of Scotland, called the Black Book of Paisley, of which an authentic copy was burned in the Abbey of Holyrood House, during the English usurpation." This assertion is derived from Dunlop's *Description of the Shire of Renfrew*. Another copy is noticed in Sibbald's *Theatrum Scoticum*, as having been in the President Sir Robert Spotswood's library, whence it was taken by General Lambert, and presented by him to Colonel, afterwards Thomas, Lord Fairfax. There are here also other references respecting this supposed record, of which after all, Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, vol. III., p. 125, quoting Bp. Nicolson's *Scottish Historical Library*, p. 93, thus summarily disposes—"The monks of Paisley are said to have written a Chronicle of Scotland, which was called the *Black Book of Paisley*, from the colour of its cover; but this like the *Black Book of Scose*, appears to have been merely a transcript of Fordun's *Scottichronicon*." Ed.

WEIGHT OF TOBACCO SMOKE DETERMINED.

Howell in his *Letters*, Book III. Letter 7, tells the story of Sir Walter Raleigh winning a wager of Queen Elizabeth, by ascertaining the weight of smoke in a pound of tobacco. The incident was recently noticed in an hebdomadal contemporary, but neither the communicant, nor the editor allude to the fact of the trick having been practised more than a thousand years before, as we find in the *Dialogues of Lucian*, who died in the year 180.

In Franklin's translation, 1781, 8vo. vol. III. p. 88, we read, "Somebody asked him (Demoxar) one day in a scoffing manner, this question—Pray, if you burn a thousand pounds of wood, how many pounds will there be of smoke? Waigh the ashes, said he, and all the rest will be smoke." F. R. A.

Howell's *Letters* are fictions, written by him while confined in the Fleet Prison for debt, and the story of the wager with the Queen doubtless originated in one of his literary embellishments. Lucian's *Dialogues* were translated by Hickee, and printed at Oxford in 1684, where possibly Howell met with the jocosery, or, as he was quite capable, he read it in one of the Latin versions, and, adopting the tradition of Raleigh's being the introducer of tobacco from Virginia, made it an illustration of his intimacy with her Majesty, in compliment to whom that country was so named. Ed.