Fulvius Agricola and Lentil Pudding (6th S. viii. 147).—Mr. Hartwell Grissell suggests that the author inquired for is one of the writers named Moebius or one of those named Meibomius, and in all probability the former suggestion is right. There are treatises in late Latin by writers of both names on subjects which justify the supposition that either might have been the author of De Fartophagia, but I have not yet met with the actual work.

R. H. Busk.

The Society of the Black Pin (6th S. viii. 187).—“Conjuration de l’épingle noire” is thus explained by Littre (t. ii. p. 1463, col. 2): “Conspiration, qui se forma sur la Restauration et dans laquelle les conjurés avaient pris pour signe de ralliement une épingle noire.” It was established by Capt. Contremoulin, and had for its object the overthrow of the Bourbons.

William Platt.

Callis Court, St. Peter’s, Isle of Thanet.

Fortuné de Boisgobey has a novel about the doings of a secret society at, if I recollect right, about the same date, entitled L’Epingle Rose.

R. H. Busk.

Anonymous Books (6th S. vii. 449).—The History of John de Castro and his Brother Bat, commonly called Old Crab. My father tells me that this book was published so long ago as 1817 or 1818, and was written by George Colman the Younger. The humour of it depended so largely upon its coarseness, that when, some years later, an expurgated, or partly expurgated, edition appeared the interest was almost destroyed. I must not, however, press the point too far. This second edition was styled merely Brother Bat, and was reviewed in Blackwood about 1857, not as a new work, but in an article headed “A Quaint Réchauffé.”

Edw. C. Hamley.

Authors of Books Wanted (6th S. viii. 289).—Modern Manicheism, and other Poems. I believe the name of the author was W. T. Thornton.

Wm. H. Peet.

Authors of Quotations Wanted (6th S. viii. 209).—

“Just for a handful of silver he left us, Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat,” will be found in a poem of Robert Browning’s called The Lost Leader, of which they are the opening lines.

M. A. M. J.

Miscellaneous:

Notes on Books, &c.


This is one of the series of texts which are being published occasionally by the University of Oxford with the title “Anecdota Oxoniensia.” Most of these texts are of great interest and importance. It is very desirable that the less-known MS. treasures of the Bodleian Library should be carefully and accurately edited with all convenient speed.

The present text, which, it need not be said, has been prepared with great care, cannot fail to be of high interest to Celtic scholars. It is called the Saltair na Rann, or Psalter of the Slaves or Quatrains, and is a collection of 162 Early Middle Irish poems. The composition of these poems has been assigned to the ninth century, but they really belong to the tenth. The MS. itself is of the twelfth century. The most important poems are the first, eleventh, and twelfth. The first relates to the creation of the world, with a description of the universe, which contains the earth, surrounded by its firmament like an egg surrounded by its shell, the seven planets, the various heavens, and the depths of hell, corresponding to the usual mediaval descriptions; the second to the penance of Adam and Eve, ending with Cain’s death in the valley of Jehoshaphat; the third to the death of Adam, with the usual story of the oil of mercy with which Adam’s body was anointed. Here is mentioned a curious tradition that Christ was born from the crown of the Virgin’s head. Two of the quatrains run thus:

“Tarmaing dorcha darachmag; maib thalman arachatatar; bithomnaig dulli Dé dil diar’ fudluis fial intempuit. Rí roiches bicniad chain croich daceann clainni Adaim iarsin rue creich, calma adrenn, cotarat láim darhiffern.”

These the editor thus translates:—

“Darkness spread over every plain; Earth’s dead arose.
Dear God’s elements were afraid
When the veil of the temple was rent.
The king who suffered in (his) fair clay
A cross for sake of Adam’s children,
Thereafter took a prey (of redeemed souls),
So that he overcame hell.”

We quote this partly for the sake of exhibiting a specimen of the metre. In general, each line of the quatrain consists of seven syllables, the first line rhyming with the second, and the third with the fourth. Alliteration is frequent, as may be observed in the example, and internal rhymes are sometimes superadded. But, as if this were not enough to secure much difficulty in the composition, there is also in most of the poems a curious rule of extreme absurdity, viz., that the number of syllables in the last word of the second and fourth lines in each quatrain shall exceed the number of syllables in the last word of the first and third lines respectively. Thus intempuit has three syllables, where dil in the preceding line has but one. There is an accidental example of this in the following lines of Milton:—

“Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity.”

But we cannot be too thankful that Milton was unaware that he was complying with this rule, and went on to speak of...