The ill luck attendant on seeing a single magpie, alluded to by Mr. Jesse, is one of the most widely diffused of the still current superstitions of England. The difficulty would be to find a county or district in which it is not commonly known. When travelling last month in the west of Normandy, where magpies are among the commonest of birds, I noted that the same superstition held good on that side of the Channel, and that it is the usual habit of the parishioners to cross themselves at the sight of a single "chattering pie." The appearance of a single jackdaw, a rarer incident than that of a single magpie, is also dreaded in some parts of the country. A stonemason of Clifton, relating to me an accident that occurred to one of the workmen at the suspension-bridge over the Avon, at the time when the river was simply spanned by a single chain, dwelt on the fact that a solitary jackdaw had been noticed by many of the workmen perched upon the centre of the chain, and had by them been regarded as a precursor of ill luck.

Another bird of ill omen is the crow, which, in this respect, be always coupled with the raven, for, as Hudibras has it—

"Is it not ominous in all countries, Where crows and ravens croak upon trees?"

That rare bird, the bittern, may also be reckoned among the feathered harbingers of evil. Bishop Hall, in his Characters of Virtues and Vices, quoted by Brand, speaking of the superstitious man, says, "if a Bittern flies over his head by night he makes his will." Some five-and-twenty years ago, during an exceptionally severe winter, a bittern made its appearance in the swamps of Perlock Bay, Somersetshire, and was speedily shot. The ill luck that befell the perpetrator of this needful deed displayed itself in the neighbourhood.

This list of birds of ill omen might, doubtless, be extended; but the other instance that occurs to my mind is that of the domestic cock, which is, however, but a partial offender, viz., when a single crow at midnight or other unwonted times. At the last day, according to the notes of the cock will announce the approach of the evil genii. J. CHARLES COX.

CRICKETING ON HORSEBACK (4th S. xi. 117.)—In Lilywhite's Score Sheets it is stated that in or about 1800 Sir Horace Mann caused a match to be played on ponies at Harrietsham. Probably this is an inaccurate record, by Lilywhite, of the match advertised in the Kentish Gazette for April 29, 1794.

M. D. T. N.

SHELLEY'S "CENCI" (4th S. xii. 328.)—This play was never acted. Mr. W. M. Rossetti, in his excellent critical memoir prefixed to the latest edition (Moxon & Co., London) of the gifted poet's works, says—

"Shelley undertook the work under a strong impulsion, yet without any confidence or experience of his capacity as a dramatist. Having completed it, he was much bent on procuring its representation on the stage; and he offered the tragedy, through his friend Thomas Love Peacock, to the manager of Covent Garden, hoping more especially to secure Miss O'Neill for the heroine; but the unnatural horror of the subject precluded even the suggestion of the part to that distinguished actress, and the whole project fell through."

A writer in Chamber's Book of Days (vol. ii., p. 173, art. "Shelley"), thus refers to this powerful tragedy:

"The Cenci was one of the few productions of his pen which was popular in his own time. A drawer in its details, taking for its subject the horrible story of Beatrice Cenci, it is less mystical than most of Shelley's writings, and possesses more human interest, though it cannot be considered in any sense fit for the stage."

W. A. C.

Glasgow.


As it seems to be generally supposed that the word wounding comes from the medieval oath, "By the Blood and Wounds" (of our Lord), I cannot see why bloody should not be derived from the same phrase. Both these words in the sense of severe were used even in polite literature in the last century. In 1760 the poet Gray wrote to Mason, "I have sent Musaeus back as you desired me, scratched here and there, and with it, also, a bloody satire, written against no less persons than you and me by name." J. JOHN PIKE, F.S.A.

OLD ENTRIES (4th S. xii. 69, 170, 335.)—The quotations (p. 69) remind me of the tenure upon which the estates of Sutton and Potton, in the county of Bedford, are said to be held by the family of Burgoyne:

"I, John of Gaunt, Do give and do grant To John of Burgoyne And the heirs of his loin Both Sutton and Potton 'Til the world's rotten." W. A. C.

Adjacent to these estates is one which formerly belonged to the family of Foley. One possessor of it conceived the wonderful idea of encompassing it at intervals with the letters of his name, each letter about half a mile from its next neighbour. There to this day stands a gigantic O in brick-