

TEACHERS' DESK.

J. C. GLASHAN, ESQ., EDITOR.

Contributors to the 'Desk' will oblige by observing the following rules :

1. To send questions for insertion on separate sheets from those containing answers to questions already proposed.

2. To write on one side of the paper.

3. To write their names on every sheet.

CORRECT ANSWERS RECEIVED.

DONALD McLEAY, Guelph, 85, (Gave selling price of consignment.)

CON O'GORMAN, 84, 85.

C. A. BARNES, Windsor, 85, 86, 87.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A Teacher and Subscriber, Smith. Read *The Principles of Speech and Cure of Stammering*, by A. Melville Bell, or let the parents consult a good medical specialist. No, if formal and written; yes, if an oral review. For accuracy with senior pupils, the written exercises can be made to take the place it would fill.

ANSWERS.

"*Merry* in the phrases 'Merry England'; 'Merry Miller of Mansfield'; 'Merry Greenwood'; is stated in a Glossary to some of Scott's works to be from *Mere* a Keltic vocable signifying *notable*, *worthy*, or *well-known*. I have not been able to find any such term in the Gaelic, Welsh or Irish Dictionaries. In many of the old English ballads *Merry* is used in a manner quite at variance with its present meaning. Compare the mode in which *good*, *worthy*, *loyal*, &c., were formerly applied to persons of rank or fortune, to indicate power and success instead of moral qualities."—H. T. SCUDAMORE.

"There is in each period or generation, one or more chartered social adjectives which may be used freely and safely. Such adjectives enjoy a sort of empire for the time in which they are current. Their meaning is more or less vague, and it is this quality that suits them for their office. But while it would be hard to define what such an adjective meant, it is nevertheless perfectly well understood. Obvious examples of this sort of adjective are the *merry* of the ballads and the *fair* and *pretty* of the Elizabethan period." THE PHILOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH TONGUE, *Earle* p. 392. (*Logical function of the Adjective; with a remarkable consequence.*)

Merry seems to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon *myrg*, pleasure; *myrge*, pleasant, joyful; *myrig*, merry; *myrth*, pleasure, joy, mirth; and may well be cognate with a Keltic family of vocables with the allied signification of *worthy*, *noble*, *notable*, *well-known*. Spencer in *FÆRY QUEEN*, Bk. I. Canto X. St. 61, has

"Saint George of mery England, the signe of Victoree,"

and Church, in a note on this phrase says *merry* means pleasant, delightful, referring to the character of the country, not to that of the inhabitants. The word in Early English seems to have had a generic rather than its present specific meaning, in one instance even meaning *serviceable*, as in,—

"Withouten mast, other myke, other myry bawelinc."

(Without mast, or boom-crutches or happy bowline.—Happy, lucky, fortunate, i.e. good hap or fortune bringing, because safe-making.)

MORRIS' *Early English*.

Alliterative Poems, the Deluge, line 417.

Of the meaning *pleasant* many examples will occur to our readers; Chaucer supplies them plentifully, see the descriptions of the 'Frere' and of "oure ost," also the after-supper address of the latter. That *pleasant*, not *merry* is the meaning of the word in these passages may be gathered from its force in similar usage, e.g.

"Hit wern the fayrest of forme and of face als,
The most and the myriest that maked wem euer."

Allit. Poems, lines 253 & 254.

Other examples are

"I slumberde in A slepying hit sownede so mure."
"I slombred in a slepying. It sweyned so merye."

Ibid, Crowley Text,

(It sounded (soughed) so pleasantly.)

"His vois was merier than the mery organ,"

"Of erbe yve that groweth in our yerd, that Mery is."

Chaucer; The Nunns Preef His Tale; lns. 35 and 146.

Passing to later times we have Scott's 'Alice Brand.'

"Merry it is in the good greenwood,"
and in an advertisement now lying before me,—

"CHAP BOOKS. A Right Merrie Collection of Garlands and Songs, &c.