

- 'From Whinny Moor that thou mayst pass  
Every night and awle,  
To Brig o' Dread thou comest at last,  
And Christ receive thy sawle.
- 'From Brig o' Dread, na brader than a thread,  
Every night and awle  
To Purgatory fire thou comest at last,  
And Christ receive thy sawle.
- 'If ever thou gave either milke or drinke,  
Every night and awle,  
The fire shall never make thee shrink,  
And Christ receive thy sawle.
- 'But if milk nor drink thou never gave naen,  
Every night and awle,  
The fire shall burne thee to the bare beane,  
And Christ receive thy sawle.'

"From Mr. Mawtesse, in whose father's youth, about 60 years since, now 16 (1686) was sung this song."

This curious illustration of the ancient mythology of these islands has been printed by Sir Henry Ellis in his edition of Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, and by Mr. Thoms in his *Anecdotes and Traditions*, at pp. 90, 91 of which latter work our correspondent will find a long note on similar traditions among the Jews, Germans, &c.]

FRANCESCO CORBETTI.—I have an engraving of the portrait of Francesco Corbetti, by "Van Den Berghé" (no date). Who was he? T. P. F.

[The subject of this query, whose name is correctly rendered above, was born at Pavia about 1630. His passionate taste for the guitar induced him to embrace the musical profession, from which not even the threats of his parents, who had otherwise destined their son, deterred him. He became the most celebrated player of his time on the guitar, and, after having travelled in Italy, Spain, and Germany, where his talent was thoroughly appreciated, became attached to the court of the Duke of Mantua. By this prince, some years afterwards, he was sent to Louis XIV., and at Versailles and Paris his powers were equally appreciated as elsewhere. Love of travel brought him to England, where the king not only gave him the title of Gentleman of the Queen's Chamber, his portrait, and a large pension, but also interested himself in his marriage. In the *Memoirs of Count Grammont* (ed. 1846, p. 174), we read: "There was a certain Italian at court famous for the guitar; he had a genius for music, and he was the only man who could make anything of the guitar: his style of play was so full of grace and tenderness, that he would have given harmony to the most discordant instruments. The truth is, nothing was too difficult to play by this foreigner. The king's [Charles II.] relish for his compositions had brought the instrument so much into vogue, that every person played upon it, well or ill; and you were as sure to see a guitar on a lady's toilette, as rouge or patches. The Duke of York played upon it tolerably well, and the Earl of Arran like Francesco himself. This Francesco had composed a saraband, which either charmed or infatuated

every person; for the whole guitary at court were trying at it, and God knows what an universal strumming there was." The English troubles in 1688 caused Francesco's return to France, where he died some years afterwards, generally regretted. His most eminent pupils were De Vabray, De Visé, and Médard—the last of whom wrote his epitaph as follows:—

"Ci git l'Amphion de nos jours,  
Francisque, cet homme si rare,  
Qui fit parler à sa guitare  
Le vrai langage des amours."]

THE BICKERSTAFFS AND MAUD THE MILK-MAID.—The following curious and amusing passage occurs in *Malthus on Population*, book III, chap. i. :—

"It is not probable that an attention to breed (in the human race) should ever become general; indeed I know of no well-directed attempts of this kind except in the ancient family of the Bickerstaffs, who are said to have been very successful in whitening the skins and increasing the height of their race by prudent marriages, particularly by that very judicious cross with Maud the milk-maid, by which some capital defects in the constitution of the family were corrected."

What does all this refer to? Who were the Bickerstaffs? F. G.

[Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., Astrologer, was an imaginary person, almost as well known at the commencement of the last century as Mr. Paul Pry or Mr. Pickwick in ours. He has been felicitously described as a gentleman and a scholar, a humorist, and a man of the world, with a great deal of nice easy *nateté* about him. Swift had assumed the name of Bickerstaff in a satirical pamphlet against Partridge, the almanac-maker. Partridge was fool enough to publish a furious reply. Bickerstaff had rejoined in a second pamphlet, still more diverting than the first. All the wits had combined to keep up the joke, and the town was long in convulsions of laughter. Steele determined to employ the name which this controversy had made popular; and, in April, 1709, it was announced that Isaac Bickerstaff, Esquire, Astrologer, was about to publish a paper called *The Tatler*. In Steele's paper of Oct. 1, 1709, will be found an account of the choice of matches in the Bickerstaff family, where we learn that the race of the Bickerstaffs "suffered very much about three hundred years ago, by the marriage of one of the heiresses with an eminent courtier, who gave us spindle-shanks and cramps in our bones; inasmuch, that we did not recover our health and legs till Sir Walter Bickerstaff married Maud the milk-maid, of whom the then Garter King at Arms, a facetious person, said pleasantly enough, 'that she had spoiled our blood, but mended our constitutions.'"]

FONTHILL ABBEY.—By whom was the old abbey of Fonthill built, in whose reign, and also by whom was it first possessed after the abolition of monasteries? M. S.

Bath.

[We never heard, and certainly cannot discover, that any monastic interest ever attached to Fonthill-Gifford—