

SAND WRITING TABLE.

BY REV. FRANCIS HASLEWOOD, F.S.A.

Amongst the numerous interesting objects to be seen in Dennington Church, a sand writing table must not be overlooked. Attention was drawn to the same by Dr. Taylor, whilst the old sexton present explained the system by which the art of writing was taught in the Chancel of the Church at the beginning of the present century, he himself having been instructed in this manner. The table stands at rather less than ordinary height. The surface is flat and the edges are surrounded by a wooden spline, thus permitting sand to be sprinkled upon the upper surface. A wooden instrument, resembling a plasterer's trowel, commonly termed a float, was employed to smooth the surface, and also obliterate the writing when no longer required. Letters were inscribed either with the fore finger or a pointed stick. Such a system had this advantage that the words or letters could be easily erased. This method of teaching writing and even drawing was frequently adopted in early times when schools were few. Whilst members were inspecting this sand table the Rev. M. B. Cowell remarked that Euclid worked his problems by delineating them upon sand. And in further proof of the antiquity of this method of inscribing with the finger, it may be mentioned that among the Tamils of Ceylon the practice of writing with the digit finger was adopted by allowing the nail to grow, and specially paring it like a quill pen for the special purpose of inscribing on palm leaves, which formed the ancient books of one of the oldest sects of the Buddhist races. It is therefore singular to find still existing a feeble recollection and reminiscence of this primeval form of caligraphy. Sand writing tables may be seen elsewhere, one in Kent was recently inspected and described. (See "Memorials of Smarden," by Rev. F. Haslewood, p. 196.)

Altogether the visit to Dennington was very enjoyable and profitable, and at about half-past six the wagonettes and other vehicles started *en route* for Saxmundham, where the members took train for their several homes. The party included:—Rev. William Hudson (one of the Honorary Secretaries of the Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society), Dr. Bensly, F.S.A., Rev. Dr. Haslewood (Chislet), Mr. Sterling Westhorp, Rev. G. Castleden, Dr. J. E. Taylor, Rev. M. B. Cowell, Rev. F. D. Brown, Rev. A. J. Bedell, Rev. R. Temple, Rev. W. E. Layton, F.S.A., Rev. J. Holme Pilkington, Rev. A. H. Hayes, Rev. W. A. Duke, Rev. M. Allen, Rev. George Irving-Davies, Rev. Walter Wyles, Rev. R. A. L. Nunns, Messrs. H. J. Wright, F. Cubitt, John S. Corder, G. Calver Mason, Robert Garrard, E. P. Ridley, T. W. Cotman, Robert Hunt, A. Field, R. E. Bunn, William Pearson, G. Abbott, W. Vick, H. R. Eyre, Thomas Harrison, E. Barrett, Freeman Wright, Mrs. Borrett, Miss Key, and a good number of the friends of members, and ladies.