Toxophilus – Roger Ascham

Toxophilus is a book about archery using the English Longbow published in 1545. The book is divided into two parts: The first part is an extended argument that target archery should be encouraged as a healthy activity benefiting both the individual and the defense of the country; the second part is an instruction manual about the use of the English longbow for target archery.

At the time of writing, the English Longbow had been in continuous use in European warfare since the medieval period. Ascham points out that target archery is the perfect preparation for the use of the longbow in warfare, so it is likely that the techniques and equipment he describes are very similar to those used by soldiers right back to the hundred years war.

Modern archers may be surprised at Ascham's knowledge about the effect of equipment on shooting performance. Amongst other subjects, Ascham describes finger spacers, arrow spine, barrelled shafts, control of bow hand placement, nocking point, and a draw length indicator.

Ascham dedicated Toxophilus to King Henry VIII (who was a keen archer). The King was so pleased with the book that he granted Ascham a pension of ten pounds per year.

(Summary by Clive Catterall)

Read by Clive Catterall. Total running time: 5:14:10

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