

The Presidential Address.

The MARQUESS OF BATH then delivered his address. He said :

My first duty—and I beg you to believe that it is my most agreeable duty—my first duty is to thank you sincerely for the compliment you have paid me in electing me to the office of your President on an occasion so interesting in the annals of your Society—the occasion of your Diamond Jubilee.

I am well aware that I have no qualifications of an expert character to fit me to fill the chair, which has been not only filled, but adorned so often during the last sixty years by men eminent for their knowledge of and distinction in those studies which are your particular care, and for their contributions to your records, thereby giving those records an interest and a fame, not merely local, but of universal recognition.

I acknowledge at once that I owe your invitation to occupy this chair to the fact that by the favour of my Sovereign I hold the high office in connection with our county which was held by your first Patron sixty years ago, and which was held

immediately before me by one who was also your Patron and twice your President—I refer to my friend the late Lord Cork. And yet I trust you will pardon me if I suggest that, while I have no claims to the title of an Archæologist or a Natural Historian, I am not altogether out of place on other grounds in the roll of your Presidents. On the archæological side, I have a keen interest in those wonderful caves at Cheddar, with which I have a proprietary connection. They have been visited by your Society on more than one occasion, and have formed the subject of several of the learned papers of antiquarian research read before you in the past, and they are certain to provide material for curious investigation and fresh criticism at the hands of many generations yet to come.

On the historical side I have a very active sympathy with your Society, as the possessor of certain ancient records connected with our county, which have been the subject of investigation by members of this Society on two occasions, when my father had the pleasure of welcoming them at Longleat, and I find in the volumes of your *Proceedings* a very interesting paper dealing with the contents of the Longleat Libraries, read before your Society on the occasion of one of those visits by my old and valued friend, the late Canon Jackson, whose reputation as an antiquary is the cherished memory of at least two counties.

These reflections have led me to adopt as the topic of my Presidential Address a brief and necessarily cursory retrospect of the period of remarkable and valuable work commemorated by your Society.

Before I do so, allow me to pay a tribute to the memories of three of your members, whose loss the Society has to deplore since your last Annual Meeting. Mr. Edward Stanley was one of your Trustees and twice your President—on the last occasion in this very place ten years ago, when you celebrated your Fiftieth Anniversary. Sir Richard Paget had been a Vice-President of your Society for over forty years.

I had the honour and privilege of being associated with both these gentlemen, both in the House of Commons and at the old Quarter Sessions of Somerset, and afterwards on the County Council, and I know how highly and how deservedly their characters and their work in public and private life were esteemed in the county they served so well. Mr. Elworthy also has passed away. He was at one time one of the General Secretaries of the Society, and your records testify to the value of his work. I desire to bear my personal testimony to the great assistance I have derived from that excellent index to twenty volumes of the Society's *Proceedings*, which he compiled with equal zeal and efficiency.

Taunton has been favoured more than any other spot in Somerset by your visits. Here is your birthplace. Here was your Jubilee gathering. Here is your Diamond Jubilee Meeting. In all, this is your sixth visit to Taunton.

In looking over your records, I have been greatly impressed by the continuity of interest and the loyalty of support which are evinced by the recurrence of the same names—alas, the flight of time does not allow that the bearers of the names should be the same—amongst your office-holders. It would take too long to mention all the well known names which are to be found recurring during the sixty years under review, but it is interesting in this respect to connect 1849 with 1908. In 1849 Lord Portman was your Patron: to-day the bearer of that title honours you by holding that office. The Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Dean of Wells are to be found amongst your Vice-Presidents in both years. The names of Acland and Hobhouse—The Right Hon. Henry Hobhouse in 1849, The Right Hon. Henry Hobhouse in 1908—both long honoured in Somerset, are also amongst the Vice-Presidents in both years. And as a pledge of permanent credit and financial security, the familiar and respected name of Badcock appears in both years as your Treasurer. Long may this hereditary interest in and attachment to your Society survive.

I confess that the perusal of the learned, eloquent, and witty address of the famous Dean of Westminster, Dr. Buckland, to this Society at its first General Meeting, has caused me to blush at my own hardihood in venturing to address you from this chair. However, I lay most of the blame at your door. You knew whom you were electing as your President. In accepting an honour, which it would have been ungracious to refuse, I had no idea that I should place myself in a position which would enable the giants of the past to shine with added lustre by contrast with the humble individual of to-day. It is extremely interesting to observe that an aspiration of Dr. Buckland's in connection with your Society, has been fulfilled at the expiration of sixty years. On that occasion he said: "The history of the County of Somerset might be considered a type of the physical history of England. Its description might be made to form a small monograph—its subterranean antiquities forming one side and its present natural history the other." He added that "he trusted that this Society would give a stimulus to some properly qualified person to undertake such a monograph." Last year the first volume of the *Victoria County History of Somerset* was issued from the press, and a masterly review of this and other volumes connected with the geology, natural history, and local annals of our county, is to be found in the current *Quarterly Review* from the able pen of Mr. Greswell, an esteemed contributor to your Society's *Proceedings*, and a valued member of your General Committee.

There are two references in Dr. Buckland's illuminating address which seem to me worthy of a passing notice, as showing how little, even the most learned of us, know beyond the days in which we live. Of course in 1849 the steam engine, whether on the railroad, in ships, or in factories, was in its infancy. Dr. Buckland, speaking of his own day, observed: "We might not live to see the time, but our posterity would live to see it; it was a time rapidly accelerated by the in-

creased demand for fuel for steam engines for our manufactures, by the increasing application of fuel to the warming of houses, and by a thousand other applications of coal to uses which were not anticipated some years ago. The coalfield of Radstock was a small one, and would soon be used up; the Forest of Dean was larger, but a large application would soon exhaust it, and our last hope was the stock in Monmouthshire and South Wales. The South Wales coalfield would endure to the time when every particle of coal in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, and the coalfields of Staffordshire, Yorkshire, and Newcastle would be exhausted. "Then our posterity would see the manufacturers of Birmingham transported to the coalfields of Monmouthshire." There have been discoveries of coal in other parts of England and Scotland since then. Radstock miners are still to be found in Radstock mines, and they have not yet become an extinct species whose remains are to be found in Paleozoic caves. Birmingham has grown, and survives, and has even added to its manufactures as the birthplace of a new Economic Industry. Another very interesting observation of Dr. Buckland's is to be found in his enthusiastic praises of red soil. "The moment they came to Dunster Castle and Nettlecombe," he remarked, "where the soil was red and the climate mild, they found the finest oaks in England, oaks which were sent for from Liverpool to make the stern posts of the largest vessels, and purchased at immense prices, for they *must* have them. It was a geological cause which made these oaks worth a hundred guineas each." I only make two comments on this dictum—neither original. *Tempora mutantur* is one, and the other is, Never prophesy unless you know. There is, however, one forecast of the eminent Dean's which during sixty years has been abundantly realized. He stated that among the many advantages of a Society such as yours, "the first was that it afforded the only occasion he knew for cultivating those feelings of brotherly love and friendship which he rejoiced to see existing among

all classes, however differing one from another in politics or religion; it afforded *neutral* ground, on which persons of all parties in religion and politics might meet." This I believe to be a correct summary of the relations of the members of your Society during the period that has elapsed since Dr. Buckland delivered his inaugural address.

I ventured at the outset to refer to my personal interest in your *Proceedings*, and I trust you will forgive me if I recall the fact that in 1864 Canon Jackson contributed to the *Proceedings* of the Society a copy of a deed which he found at Longleat, bearing the seal of Savaric, bishop of Bath and Glastonbury, by which the bishop gave to the sacristy of Glastonbury Abbey, "the Church of St. John Baptist of North Binne with the Chapel of Pennard." At the date of the canon's communication your present President had just passed from the stage of long clothes to short clothes, and I can conscientiously avow that he then had no anticipation of the honour in store for him to-day, or of the duties it would involve.

Glastonbury has thrice been the scene of your annual gatherings, and the abbey has on many occasions furnished the topic of some of the most interesting contributions to your *Proceedings*. In fact, I doubt if any other object of interest in the county occupies a larger space in your records or has attracted wider attention. It is not to be wondered at that the cradle of the christian faith in this island, with all the legendary lore that is gathered round its glorious abbey, should have excited such interest, or that it should continue to excite such interest in succeeding generations. I will not attempt the task that others so competent have often undertaken of dilating on the abbey and its history. But to-day it is fitting that I should congratulate the Bishop of Bath and Wells that in the sixtieth year of the life of this Society, with which he and his predecessors have been so closely connected, he has achieved the object so dear to his heart, and that by his exer-

tions he has acquired for sacred uses for all time, the possession of that abbey which has its rivals but knows no superior.

The mention of Glastonbury Abbey recalls the name of one of the most illustrious of this Society's members. I refer to Professor Freeman, twice your President,—on the second occasion at Glastonbury. His address on that occasion, which dealt with the history of the abbey, was described by the Bishop of Bath and Wells as “truly eloquent and learned,” and it is indeed a mine of valuable information. No one has contributed more fully or more richly to your records both as a local historian and as an architectural critic, especially of our churches, but while with grateful pride we regard him as the annalist of our county, we do not forget his wider fame as the historian of our country.

From your records I find another piece of information of personal interest. It appears it was in Somerset that William Smith commenced those remarkable discoveries of the order of succession in the strata which ultimately gained for him the title of “the Father of English Geology,” and it was the steward of the estate of an ancestor of mine who pointed out to him the light his discoveries shed on the improvement of agriculture, and urged him to continue his researches by laying down the dictum that “that is the only way to know the true value of land.”

I referred at the commencement of my address to my personal connection with the caves at Cheddar, and I would like to remind you of the description given by that very learned archæologist, Professor Boyd Dawkins, at the Society's Meeting twenty years ago, of the ancient inhabitants of Cheddar. He said in the course of a most instructive address at Cheddar: “They had proof that Cheddar was inhabited by a long headed race, who used the stone axe, introduced the art of farming and husbandry, and the knowledge of domestic animals, and the arts of pottery and mining, if not the art of cheese and butter making.” As a Somerset man and a Cheddar landlord

I hope the present and future generations will maintain this creditable reputation.

I have designedly dealt to-day with the records of what famous men have done towards placing on record the fame of Somerset and her sons. I recognise that it is the peculiar province of your Society to find "tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones," but I also insist on the doctrine: "La vray science et le vray étude de l'homme c'est l'homme," or, as Pope has it, "The proper study of mankind is man."

If I need any defence for the course I have adopted, I find it in a passage in Professor Freeman's first Presidential Address in 1871. He pronounced the object of your Society to be "the study of the history of the district from the beginning, the history of the land itself and of all the living things which have dwelled on its surface, from the earliest fact that geology can reveal to the latest piece of local history which is removed enough from our own ken to be clothed with any share of the charm of antiquity." At that meeting Freeman asked the question: "Is the local limitation to Somerset of the operations of your Society a narrow or an illiberal one?" He answered: "I think not," and he proceeded to give his reasons. I also answer: "I think not." I take leave to say that the records of your *Proceedings* for sixty years, and the Papers contributed during that period by men of the highest learning dealing with subjects as varied as they are interesting, prove that your aims and your achievements have been neither narrow nor illiberal. I would add that the range of your researches, investigations and studies can never become narrow, can never become exhausted through being confined to the locality of our county, to its history, its productions, its changes, its people, and its varying relations with other localities. In the realms of knowledge and research there is no finality, and the labours of each generation will always furnish fresh material for investigation, research, and criticism for

those who are to carry on the work when they have passed away.

And now I come to the end of my self-imposed task of the survey of sixty years of the records of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. No one of my indulgent audience is more conscious than myself of the imperfections in the execution of that task. The limitations of time must needs have made it perfunctory; the limitations of technical experience and special knowledge have necessarily rendered it incomplete. I can only plead that I have brought to the discharge of this honourable duty the same qualities which I endeavour to employ in the performance of every public and private duty that devolves upon me—the honest exertion of whatever humble capacities I possess and the earnest desire, as far as in me lies, to meet the wishes and to fulfil the expectations of those to whom I owe my services and my gratitude.

I venture, in conclusion, to indulge in the modest hope that when another six decades of this Society's creditable and valuable work shall have been completed, and when my successor in this chair shall on that occasion have entered on the discharge of his functions

Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.

The Rev. H. H. WINWOOD, F.G.S., proposed a vote of thanks to Lord Bath for his address, which he said was exceedingly useful as a record of the sixty years' work of the Society. At the Taunton Meeting of 1872, Mr. Ayshford Sanford, a leading landowner, geologist and antiquary was President. He need hardly say the present President's name would stand at least as high as the name of any of those who had preceded him.

The Rev. C. W. WHISTLER, M.R.C.S., seconded, and the resolution was carried with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT in acknowledgment thanked the members

very warmly for their kindness. He had nothing to add to what he said at the conclusion of his address except to emphasize those remarks and to express to them his deep gratitude for the manner in which they had listened to him.

This concluded the morning meeting; and the members then adjourned to the "London Hotel," where a large company sat down to luncheon, the President presiding.