The PRESIDENT then delivered the following

Inaugural Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

MOST of the addresses we have been favoured with lately have been delivered by gentlemen before their election. It is my happy privilege to deliver mine after that event, and to commence it with the expression of my deep sense of the honour conferred on me by my election as President of this Society for the ensuing year.

In the remarks I am about to make, I shall confine myself to the Archæological branch of our pursuits. Of the Natural History branch I am, I regret to say, quite incompetent to speak. I wish it was in my power by any words of encouragement to excite greater attention to this most interesting science, as I rather doubt whether it just now occupies with us that prominent position which it so deservedly merits. Ample reward awaits the persevering student, both of the organic and inorganic productions of nature. He not only instructs and amuses himself by his studies, but every new fact, however minute, which his skill and diligence bring to light, enriches the vast store-house of science with additional materials for developing the works of creation, and with fresh proofs of the unerring hand of its omnipotent Author.

But I must turn aside for a moment and ask you to join with me in expressing our great regret at the death of our valued friend, the Rev. Fredk. Brown. He was a zealous Member of the Society, and at one time one of our assiduous

(1). The sale was stopped, and the building has since been purchased by the Corporation of Taunton, who are pledged to preserve its ancient features.

Honorary Secretaries. He devoted his attention, latterly, to the genealogy of families connected with Somersetshire, and several valuable papers in our journals from his pen show with what care and research he pursued his enquiries. I fear his loss will not be easily replaced.

Three and thirty years have flown by since this Society visited Yeovil, having only met here in 1853—four years after its formation. Another generation has sprung up since then, and I hope we have many young friends amongst us to-day, who, when they know more of the objects of our studies, will be induced to join our ranks and lend a helping hand to our agreeable labours.

The utilitarian doctrine is happily exploded, that the pursuits of a cultivated people should be confined to objects solely tending to better the actual condition of human life, and it is too late now for critics to ridicule the study of Antiquity, even when limited to such local details as come within our range. Archæology in fact, has become the fashion of the day.

In our humble efforts to revive in this county the memories of the past—to trace out and preserve the works of olden time, hitherto unnoticed or neglected, and to illustrate the manners and customs of our ancestors—we believe that we are promoting a rational and refined amusement, that we are doing our part to elevate the tastes and literature of the age, and that the fragments we gather together are serviceable to the historian, in delineating the features of the period to which they relate. The harvest, we know, cannot be so plentiful as it was. The first labourers in the field had the accumulations of centuries to reap from. Those who come after can only glean what is left behind. Still we have no reason to complain. We can turn with satisfaction to the thirty-one volumes which record what we have accomplished, and yet there is an abundant and varied store remaining, which must be worked with energy and perseverance, before we can pronounce the topography and history of Somersetshire to be complete.

To allude to our future career, no history of a county *can* be complete which does not trace from the earliest period the descent of the great feudal estates within it. Collinson deserves great praise for his labours on this subject; but our sources of information are much more numerous and accessible than in his day, and an account of the Land Baronies in this county would be a welcome contribution. A gentleman unusually well qualified for the task—Mr. Thomas Bond of Tyneham—has already favoured us with a pattern for such a work in his valuable paper on "The Barony of Brito;" and I trust that both he and others of our Members who are skilled in such lore may be induced to work out the history of these territorial honours. For the accomplishment of such a work we shall derive great assistance from the publications of the Somerset Record Society, a kind of annexe to our own, and I trust it will obtain from our Members generally that material support which will alone enable it to carry on its operations with energy and despatch.

Hoping almost against hope, I should hail with great pleasure the publication by that Society, of the Institutions of Incumbents to the churches in this diocese, from the Bishop's Registers, which reach back to the reign of Edward III. Their importance to the local historian cannot be over-rated. The patron of a living was generally the Lord of the Manor, and as every institution shews on the face of it who was then the patron, we are furnished with cotemporary evidence of the ownership of the manor and have the means of ascertaining the changes occurring in it by alienation or succession. Such a publication would be more appreciated, as, contrary to the practice in some dioceses, and notwithstanding the kind words of encouragement from our good Bishop,[1] the Registers at Wells are sealed books, even to literary inquirers, except on the payment of official fees.

(1). See *Proceedings*, vol. xix. p. 18.

The Heraldry of Somerset is far from complete, and the whole Armory of the county requires to be collected and arranged. Then there is the Genealogy of our "gentle families." Some advance has lately been made by the publication of the Heralds' Visitation books of this county, but implicit reliance must not be placed on them, as the pedigrees are often imperfect and incorrect, and there is plenty of work for a zealous labourer in this part of our vineyard. Genealogy, however, is a study that must be pursued with great caution, or it will soon degenerate into pedigree making.

In noticing the objects of interest worthy of your attention at this meeting, I shall speak as a Yeovilian, and I must beg you to recollect that our available area is much less than in the interior of the county, as we stand on the confines of Dorsetshire, and our rigid Excursion Secretary will not allow us to wander over the border. But we are anxious to show you all we can.

We cannot boast of any such primæval organic remains as those for which the Mendips are celebrated; neither, as far as my knowledge extends, have we any hut circles, camps, or barrows. Places of interment of this remote age are found very rarely in the vallies, and only by accident, there being seldom any tumuli to mark their situation. There was, however, a sepuchral discovery made some years ago, by the late Mr. George Harbin, in a quarry of his, near the Yeovil Junction railway station, which I mention, as no account of it has ever been published. It was a vault or chamber hewn in the solid rock, and covered with a stone slab, and in it was the skeleton of a man, in a sitting posture, with a vase or cup on one side, and part of a buck's horn on the other. Close to it was another similar chamber, which contained the skeleton of a horse; and at some distance off, in the same field, a large pit was laid open, in which were deposited an immense quantity of human bones, mixed with stones and earth. The cup and horn are preserved at Newton. The cup is about seven inches

high and four wide, made of sun-burnt clay, and with the usual punctured ornamentation of British pottery.

To come to the Roman period, Collinson, in his *History of Somerset*, says that in all probability Yeovil was a town in the days of that Dominion, as coins and remains of mosaic pavements have been found there; but I do not think the finding of coins very cogent evidence of such an occupation, and no Roman pavements have ever been discovered nearer than East Coker. With such an important place as Ilchester—then the Roman station of Ischalis—so near, Yeovil would hardly have existed as a Roman town. Had it been then colonized, the Vicinal way from Ilchester to Dorchester, which can be traced for nearly the whole distance, would naturally have passed through Yeovil, whereas it is carried about two miles to the west, through the village of Preston, in which foundations of it were a few years ago discovered.

I will now, with your permission, introduce you to the early documentary history of Yeovil itself. To commence with the name: it is popularly supposed to mean the Town or Ville on the river Yeo. But this derivation, although tempting by its simplicity, is not correct. Yeovil or Yevel is only the softened form of Givel or Gifle, a name which in Saxon times was applied both to the town and to the small river[1] which, in its course toward the Parrett, leaves its mark on Givelton (now Yeovilton) and Givelceastre (now Ilchester). "Givel," as the Bishop informed us in his Presidential address at Wells, in 1873, occurs as the name of a river in several other parts of England, and the root of it is probably a British one, signifying water.

We meet with Givel before the conquest, as part of the private domains of the Anglo-Saxon Kings. King Alfred the Great, and his brothers, inherited it, amongst other estates, from their father, Ethelwulf; and having acquired the entirety

(1). This stream is mentioned in a charter of King Athelstan's, A.D. 933, where, in describing the boundaries of lands at Bradford Abbas, which is separated from Yeovil by the Ivel, it is said "thonne and lang streams oth gifle." *Cart. Sax.*, No. 695.

by survivorship, Alfred, by his will, gives to his youngest son "that land at Gifle and at Cruc." Commentators on the will have explained Gifle to refer to Gidley in Devonshire—a random shot, unsupported by evidence. The exact identity of the name, and the fact that it is coupled with the land at Cruc—*i.e.*, Crewkerne—an almost contiguous place, quite justify us in treating Gifle as situate in Somersetshire, but whether it means Yeovil or Ilchester, admits of some doubt. It may be said in favour of Ilchester that as both it and Crewkerne were "Terra Regis," or Crown Land, at the time of the Norman survey it is a fair presumption that they were the Gifle and Cruc of Alfred's will. I think it probable that these royal domains were not merely the towns—or what then represented the towns—of Yeovil and Crewkerne, but that they extended to the territories which, according to the *Inquisitio Gheldi* of 1084, constituted the King's portion of the hundreds of Givelea and Cruc, amounting together to 120 hides of land, and therefore a much more suitable provision for a King's son. This theory would tell in favour of Yeovil, for Ilchester was not within the hundred of Givelea, but was part of the royal manor of Milborne Port, and not annexed to any hundred, until after the Norman conquest. But we have another pre-Domesday notice of Gifle. Many Anglo-Saxon Somersetshire coins of Edgar and his successors are still extant; some of which bear the impress of Gifle or Gifel, and some Gifeles and Gifleces; but all, according to the authorities, referring to Ilchester. Of those marked Gifleces, or the like, there can be no doubt; but the others, which bear the name of Gifle, certainly may have been minted at Yeovil. We know that Ilchester, as a fortified town, was entitled by the laws of King Athelstan to the right of mintage; a privilege which Yeovil, being unfortified, could not claim. But there must have been exceptions to the law, as coins were minted at Crewkerne, which was also unfortified, and if the Gifle of Alfred's will means Yeovil, it is quite possible that the right of mintage

belonged both to Yeovil and Crewkerne as "Terra Regis." Sir Henry Ellis, in his *Introduction to Domesday*, suggests that the appearance on coins of the names of places which did not possess the right of mintage, indicated the residence of the moneyer, and not the mint from which the coins were issued. According to this supposition, the moneyer might live at Yeovil, and carry on his business at Ilchester; rather an inconvenient arrangement, which I do not implicitly credit. One strong point in favour of Yeovil is that there could hardly be two Gifles; and, as she existed before the Norman survey, if she was not Gifle, what was her name? I own I am puzzled, and I dare say you are also.

Coming now to the Domesday survey of 1086, we find Yeovil divided into two manors: one consisting of two hides in "Givela," held by the mesne tenants of Robert, Earl of Moretain, whose son William founded the priory of Montacute, and another called Ivel, or, according to *The Exeter Domesday*, "Iula," containing six hides, held by Hugh Maltravers, the mesne tenant of William De Ow or D'Eu, who must not be confounded with William Count D'Eu.

With regard to "Iula," it is said—"To this manor are added twenty-two 'mansuræ,' which twenty-two men held in paragio, in the time of King Edward. They pay a rent of twelve shillings." "Mansura" means, according to Kelham, a house belonging to, or going together with, some land in a borough—something like our word messuage; but the term "in paragio" is very obscure. Collinson translates it "in co-parcenary," or "joint tenancy," but this cannot always be correct, as in some places—for instance, at Stoke Courcy and Bishop's Lydeard, in this county—one Thane held lands in paragio. Sir Henry Ellis says, in his work already quoted, "Paragium, in the language of Domesday, meant holding in equal portions as well in rights and privileges as in actual property;" but in addition to that it must, I think, refer to some special kind or incident of tenure.

The spirit of the feudal system affected the policy of the Anglo-Saxons long anterior to the Norman conquest. No subject landowner was perfectly independent. Even the lesser Thanes, and Sokemen were commended, as it was termed, to some Lord, rendering to him military service in return, and every community or manor was overshadowed by a superior head, to whom the members were collectively liable to render such tribute of seigniority as the state had authorized or custom had established. I conjecture, then, that in our case, "in paragio" indicates that these twenty-two men were free men as far as the policy of the law would allow, that they or their predecessors had acquired their holdings under the King, or his grantee, by a common title, that they were subject to individual homage, but an entire rent, enjoyed exceptional rights and privileges, and shared collectively the obligations impressed on their property. How they preserved and regulated their succession we cannot say. If not a Guild, they were the germs of one, and I believe that they were the forerunners of those who were successively called the Burgesses of Yeovil, —the Community or Commonalty of Yeovil,—and lastly, the Portreeve and Burgesses of Yeovil—a quasi-corporate body —which flourished after a fashion, retained their, more or less, twenty-two Anglo-Saxon tenements down to the present age, and died unlamented in the year 1853. If you glance at the annexed map of the corporate property made in the year 1813, you will not think my idea a visionary one.

William D'Eu's lordship of Ivel did not remain long in his hands. He took part in the rebellion against William Rufus, and although he returned to his allegiance for a time, he was in the year 1095 convicted of treason, and forfeited his life and his estates. How long the Crown retained this Lordship we cannot say. For the first century and a half after the Conquest, the territorial history of England is a perfect blank, except in rare instances, where some rays of light descend from the records of religious houses — from

MAP

OF THE ESTATE BELONGING TO THE CORPORATION OF THE BOROUGH OF

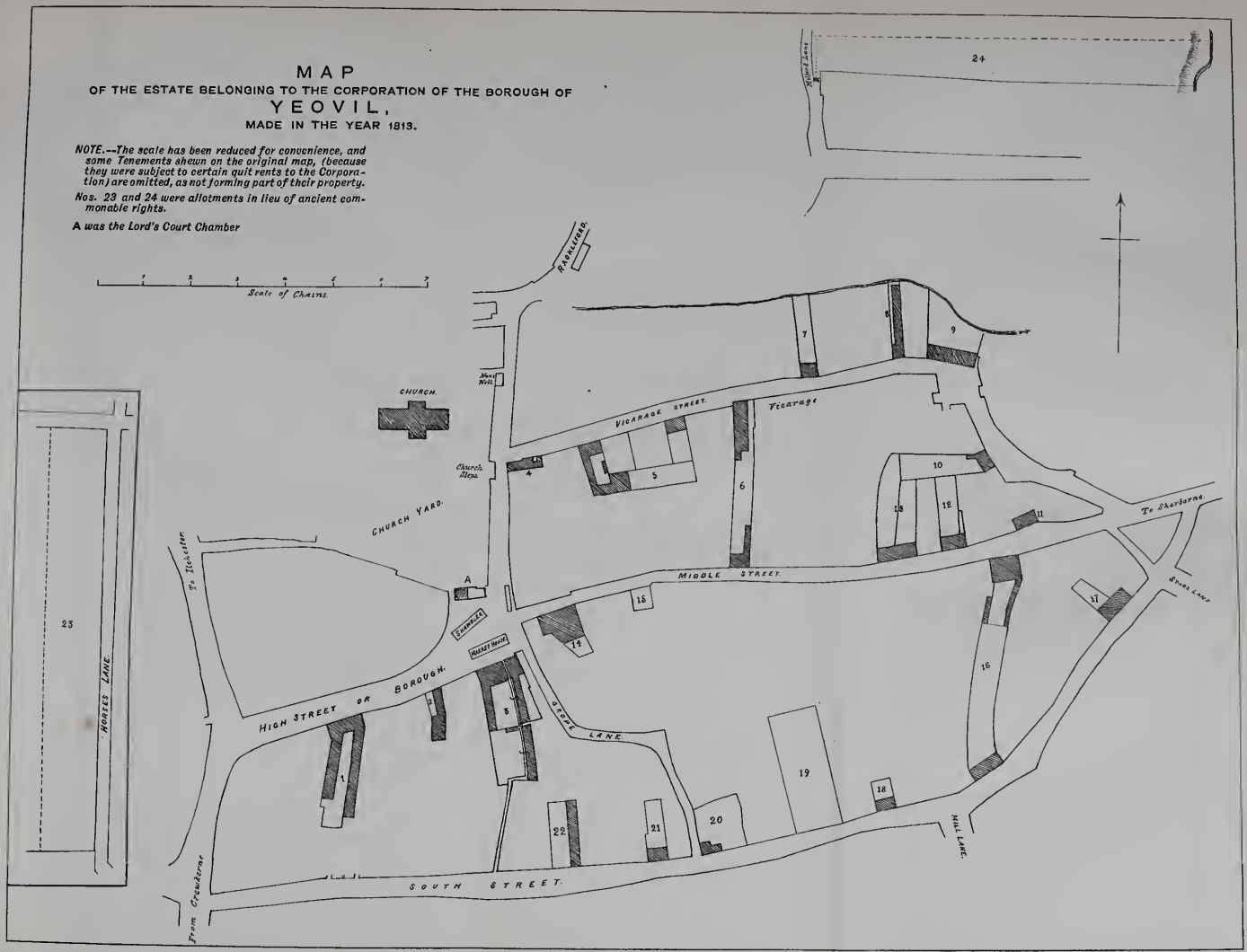
YEOVIL,

MADE IN THE YEAR 1813.

NOTE.—The scale has been reduced for convenience, and some Tenements shewn on the original map, (because they were subject to certain quit rents to the Corporation) are omitted, as not forming part of their property.

Nos. 23 and 24 were allotments in lieu of ancient commonable rights.

A was the Lord's Court Chamber



recitals in later documents, and an occasional note in the earliest Pipe Rolls. Of Yeovil, we have no direct record until the reign of King John, who granted "Gifle" to the family of Say, of Richard's Castle in Shropshire. But from a piece of secondary evidence, to which we shall allude more fully, we learn that long before the reign of Henry III, part of William D'Eu's manor[1] had been, by royal grant, devoted to pious purposes, and became *the Free Tenement of Yeovil,* the remainder continuing in the possession of Hugh Maltravers or his descendants, by whose family and that of their successors, the Earls of Arundel, it was, with the exception of the advowson of the church, held until the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

It is sad to reflect, but true it is, that even when we come to historical times, the arts of peace contribute but little to the early history of this country. The advance of armies, rather than the advance of civilization, is the theme of her pages, which, when stripped of accessories, sink into a mere chronicle of military expeditions and endless wars. The moralist was right when he said, "Happy is the country which has no history." Equally true is it that we should know little or nothing of the early state of our cities and towns were it not for the disputes and litigation which took place respecting them. And, to descend to our case, the annals of Yeovil would be very insignificant but for a contest between Waleran Teutonicus, the rector of the church,[2] and John Maltravers, who had succeeded his ancestor Hugh as lord of the ville. It occurred two or three years only after the great Charter of Runnymede had been wrung from the tyrant John. The

(1). I am assuming that it *did* form part of William D'Eu's manor, but the evidence is only circumstantial, and as William Moretain, who succeeded to his father's possessions, was also attainted and put to death about the year 1106, for taking part in the rebellion of Robert Curthose against Henry I, it is quite possible that the tenement may have been part of his manor.

(2). This was probably Waleran "le Tyes," or "the German," who was a very influential person in the reign of Henry III, and in the immediate service of his Sovereign. He appears to have been a layman, which may partly be accounted for by the fact that at Yeovil the cure of souls was not entirely confided to the rector, there being a curate or vicar under him.

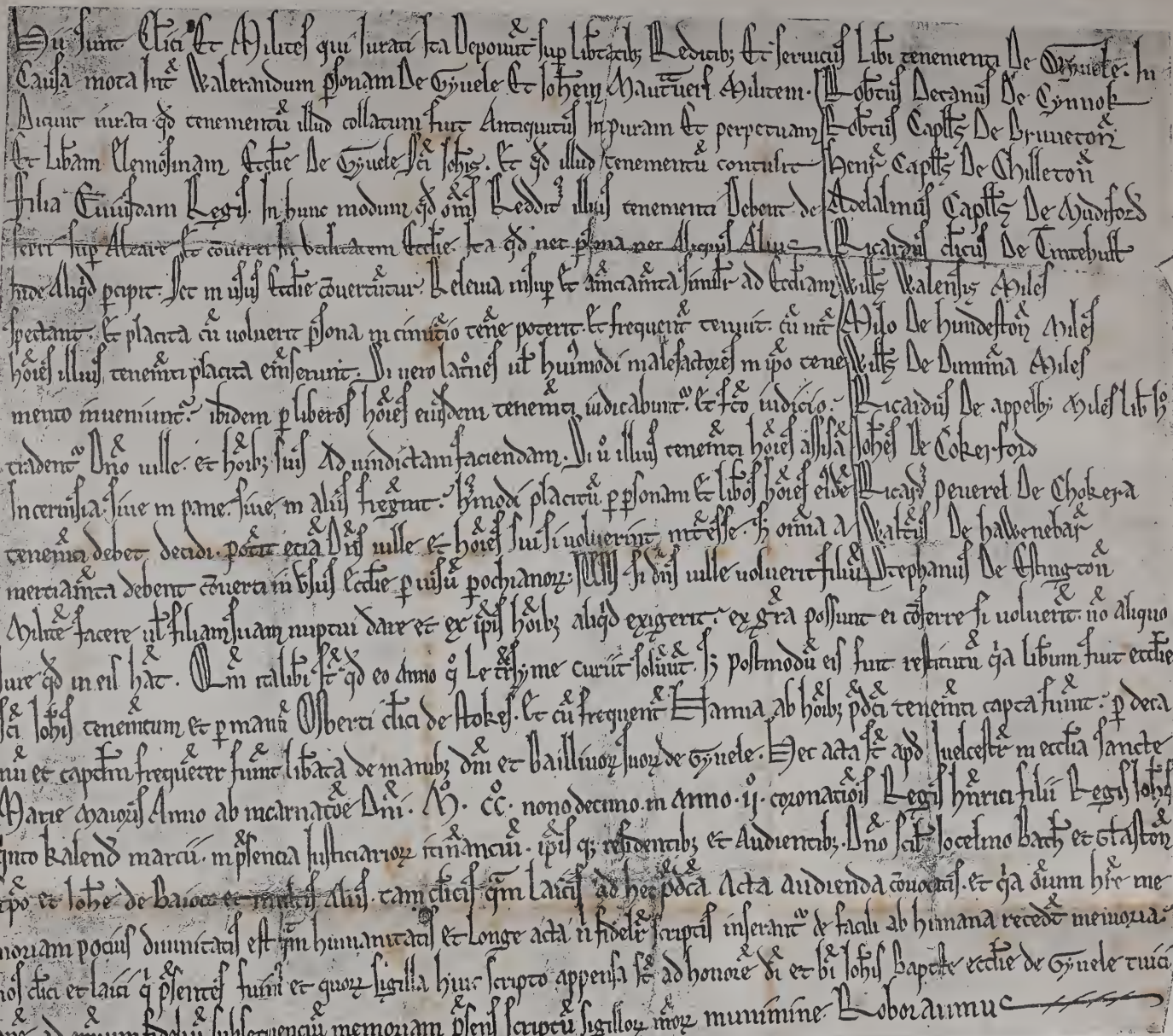
declaration in it promising that "cities and boroughs and towns and ports" should have all their liberties and free customs, must have encouraged a spirit of resistance to oppression by lords of franchises, and we may conclude that this spirit penetrated even to these remote parts, and that some impolitic act of the lord roused the parson and his men to maintain their privileges and assert their independence. Our information is derived from a document in her Majesty's Record Office, in the form of a verdict on an Inquisition held before the Justices Itinerant sitting at Ilchester on the 5th before the Kalends of March, 2nd Henry III, that is the 25th of February, 1219. It is a very fine specimen of the writing of that early period, and, thinking it may afford some variety to a dull address, I have, by the kind permission of the Deputy Keeper of Records, had a fac-simile photograph made of it, and have now the pleasure to lay it before you. It is written in contracted Latin, and the following is a literal translation :—

These are the clerks and knights who being sworn thus depose upon the liberties rents and services of the free tenement of Gyvele in the cause moved between Walerand parson of Gyvele and John Mautravers knight. The jurors say that that tenement was conferred of old time in pure and perpetual frank almoigne on the church of Saint John of Gyvele. And that the daughter of a certain king conferred that tenement in this wise that all the rents of that tenement ought to be placed upon the altar and converted to the profit of the church

Robert dean of Cynnok'
Robert chaplain of Bruneton' [1]
Henry chaplain of Chilleton'
Adelalm chaplain of Mudiford'
Richard clerk of Tintehull'
William Walensis [*Welsh*] knight
Miles of Hundeston' knight
William of Dummer knight
Richard of Appelby knight free man
John of Cokerford
Richard Peverel of Choker [2]
Walter of Hawenebar' [3]
Stephen of Estington [4]

so that neither the parson nor any other receives anything therefrom but they are converted to the uses of the church. Reliefs moreover and amercements likewise belong to the church. And the parson can hold when he will and frequently has held pleas in the churchyard when pleas between the men of that tenement have arisen. If truly thieves or such like malefactors are found in the said tenement they shall be judged there by free men of the same tenement and

(1). Brympton. (2). Coker. (3). Hewingbeer in Hardington. (4). Ashington.



FACSIMILE OF A VERDICT RELATING TO THE FREE TENEMENT OF GYVELE.

2d Hen. III, A.D. 1219.

From the Original in the Record Office (Q.R. Cart. Miscell. Antiq., Bundle 897.)

judgment being done they shall be delivered to the lord of the town and to his men for punishment to be made. If truly the men of that tenement shall break the assise in ale or in bread or in other things such plea ought to be decided by the parson and free men of the same tenement. The lord of the town also may be present and his men if they will but all amercements ought to be converted to the uses of the church by view of the parishioners. Also if the lord of the town wish to make his son a knight or to give his daughter in marriage and shall require any thing from the same men they may if they will confer it on him of grace not by any right which he has in them. But they are so free that in that year in which the Thirteenth ran they paid but afterwards it was restored to them because the tenement of the church of Saint John was free and by the hand of Asbert clerk of Stokes. And when frequently naams [*i.e.*, distresses] have been taken from the men of the aforesaid tenement they have been oftentimes delivered by the dean and chapter from the hands of the lord and his bailiffs of Gyvele. These things are done at Ivelcestre in the church of Saint Mary Major on the fifth before the Kalends of March in the year from the Incarnation of the Lord one thousand two hundred and nineteen in the second year of the Coronation of King Henry son of King John in the presence of the justices itinerant and these sitting and hearing, to wit, lord Jocelyn bishop of Bath and Glastonbury and John of Bayeux and many others as well as clerks as laymen called together to hear these things aforesaid done. And because to have memory of all things is rather [the attribute] of divinity than of humanity and things done at a far off time unless they are faithfully ingrossed in writing easily recede from human memory We clerks and laymen who were present and whose seals are appended to this writing in honour of God and guarding of the church of Saint John Baptist of Gyvele for the memory of all the faithful after to come have strengthened the present writing with the defence of our seals." [*The seals are gone.*]

[Endorsed in a later hand.] "Yevell Liberties of the church of Yevell allowed before the Justices Itinerant the fifth of the Kalends of March in the year of the Lord mccxix and second year of the Coronation of King Henry son of John."

One or two remarks by way of explanation. The justices, you may have noticed with surprise, sat in a church—the church of St. Mary Major at Ilchester, but this was not unusual, for although it was held to be profane and unlawful to transact secular business within the sacred walls of churches, an exception was allowed in favour of the King's Courts of Law, and the practice was continued for some time after, until prohibited by the Canons and Constitutions of the

church. Besides the Judges, Jocelyn Bishop of Bath and Glastonbury was present—not as a member of the Court—but representing his episcopal rights over the church; and looking at the fact of his personal attendance and at the composition of the jury—principally of clergymen and knights from the neighbourhood—it is, I think, probable that the proceeding was not an ordinary trial, but a special inquiry for the purpose of solemnly settling and recording the relative rights of the Parson and his tenants on the one hand, and the Lord of the Ville on the other.[1]

However this may be, the verdict furnishes us with the earliest account of the foundation and endowment of the church of Yeovil. And it is to be observed that a clear distinction is made between the Lord of the town or ville generally, with his ordinary feudal powers over it, and the Parson as Lord of that particular part of it called "The Tenement," which was conferred on the church in Frankalmoign. The parson was contending, not for his own rights only, but for those of the successors of (to coin a word) the paragian men of Domesday, and by his assistance their ancient liberties were recognized and confirmed. They were exempted by reason of their lords tenure from those feudal taxes and aids to which even the tenants of the Crown were liable; they were freed from all external jurisdiction, and they were allowed to decide their own quarrels in their own tribunals. But the badge of feudal servitude was continued, and although confided to the maternal keeping of the church their dependence became afterwards of a still more absolute nature.

It only remains for us to identify "the daughter of a certain King." If Yeovil was the Gifle of King Alfred's will, this royal personage may have been the daughter of one of his successors, of the Anglo-Saxon or Danish dynasty, in which case the foundation would have taken place before the date of

(1). An inquiry of this nature, made in the year 1123, respecting certain rights of the Abbey of Oseney in Oxfordshire, is mentioned by Kennet in his *Parochial Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 274.

Domesday book. It is true there is no mention in that survey of a church at Yeovil; but the better opinion now is that this omission is not conclusive, as, unless a church was endowed with land liable to be taxed, its existence was a collateral fact, immaterial to the direct object of the survey. Still, if the foundation had preceded the survey, the church and the twenty-two tenements would have appeared under the head of lands in Frankalmoign; and as they do not, we must, in my opinion, ascribe the date of the foundation to some period between the year 1095, when the manor held by William D'Eu escheated to the Crown, and the year 1154, when Henry II ascended the throne. This limits us to the daughters of Henry I, who had eight, one only, the Empress Maud, being legitimate; and if we adopt the general rule of construction, that the word 'daughter' means 'legitimate daughter,' we should have no hesitation in ascribing the foundation to that royal lady. She possessed the regal power for a short time, during which she did grant a charter to the town of Devizes; and as the people in the West were strong adherents to her cause in her contests with Stephen, we may not unreasonably suppose that for some special reason, she was induced to grant to Yeovil the great boon of an endowed and privileged church. It seems rather unaccountable that after a lapse of only about seventy years the name of so important a personage as the Empress should have been forgotten or omitted by the objects of her bounty, and we may surmise whether the designation in the verdict was not that by which the Empress was at that time known, for it is worthy of remark that the author of *Gesta Stephani*, a cotemporary writer, never calls her the Empress Matilda, and generally "The King's daughter." It is however, quite possible that William D'Eu's manor was given by Henry I to one of his seven natural daughters (two of whom we know were endowed with estates in the West), who may have afterwards dedicated it to the church. On this supposition her name may have

been really unknown at the time of the enquiry, or, if known, advisedly concealed.

The long conflicts between Henry III and the barons fomented the struggles of the English for freedom. The towns either assumed or obtained from their lords immunities which rendered them comparatively independent; and although the men of Yeovil, under the close control of the Church, could hardly hope to shake off their yoke, they evidently resolved it should not be more burdensome than ancient usage warranted. Accordingly, when we come to the reign of Edward I, we find without surprise a contest existing between the men of "The Tenement" and Robert de la More, their parson and lord, who complained that they had encroached on his rights of franchise. Of the particulars we are not informed. All we know is that the dispute was amicably terminated by an agreement entered into before the Justices Itinerant at Somerton, 34th Edward I; in which, for the first time, we hear the lord's men styled burgesses, one of whom, as his Provost or Portreeve, was to preside in his Courts and collect his rents. The right of appointing this officer was evidently one source of the differences that had arisen, and the agreement settles this by declaring that he should be elected by the burgesses, but sworn as the officer of the parson. In other respects the terms of the agreement follow the verdict of 1219. Still there was no lasting peace. In the reign of Edward III, Robert de Sambourne, Canon of Wells, became parson on the presentation of Richard, 13th Earl of Arundel, who had purchased the advowson of John Maltravers, and during his incumbency a fresh war broke out between him and the burgesses, which extended into the time of Richard II, and the struggle continued long afterwards. In short, from the 14th century to the 19th, there has been, more or less, a constant stream of litigation flowing between these burgesses and their lord, from which, as far as we can judge, they derived little or no benefit. They were more

successful in resisting the attacks of the Crown, whose claims to their property they completely defeated.

The advowson of the church, with the lordship belonging to it, passed out of the Arundel family into the possession of the Crown. Richard, 14th Earl of Arundel, by his will in 1392, directed it to be sold, and Thomas Fitzalan, 15th Earl, having no issue, did sell it to King Henry V, who bestowed it on the Convent of Sion, which he had founded at Isleworth in Middlesex. This house—the only one in England of the order of St. Bridget—was what was called a double monastery, consisting both of nuns and priests, but with a lady superior as abbess over both. By the rules of the order, silence, except during specified periods, was strictly enjoined—a hard task, no doubt, to some members of the community. To enable them to make their wants known, a table of signs was compiled, which has been printed in the *Excerpta Historica,* from the original in the Library of St. Paul's Cathedral, and it is curious to observe to what strange grimaces and devices these misguided devotees must have resorted, in order to carry out 'the silent system.' The church of Yeovil was soon, with the consent of the bishop, appropriated to this convent, and so remained until the suppression of monasteries by Henry VIII, when it again reverted to the Crown.

The existing church is a lofty and uniform building of the early Perpendicular style. There is no trace of any older work, excepting the Decorated arch at the entrance to the crypt, and the crypt itself; where, I may mention, are laid some heraldic tiles, which were found buried under the floor before the communion table. The crypt, I take it, belonged to that earlier church, which in a charter relating to lands in Yeovil, dated in 1226, is called the Great Church *(magna ecclesia)* of Givela; perhaps to distinguish it from the church of the manor of Kingston juxta Yeovil, now a sinecure, which we know existed before that date. The erection of the present church is generally ascribed to the munificence

of the ladies of Sion; but as there is no account of such a work in the voluminous accounts of their ministers or stewards, preserved in the records of the Augmentation Office, I am somewhat sceptical on the point. I am rather inclined to suggest Richard, 13th Earl of Arundel, to be the builder. He was the patron who presented Robert de Sambourne, in 1360, some fifty years before the foundation of the House of Sion; and as the Earl was possessed of fabulous wealth, Sambourne would be very likely to prevail on him to devote part of his riches for so pious an object. Sambourne was himself a great friend to his church, and founded and endowed a chantry in it. There is, indeed, some ground for attributing the erection of a portion of the church to him. By his will, made at Wells, in 1382, shortly before his death, he directs, if he should die at Yeovil, to be buried in the parish church there; and then, after giving £20 for the expense of his burial, and 40s. to his executors, he directs them to apply the residue of his estate "towards the work *(circa opus)* of the Church of Ievele, until it shall be finished," and if there was any overplus, it was to be spent in masses and other Divine offices. It is possible that the Earl of Arundel left the work unfinished at his death in 1376, and that Sambourne completed it.

You will observe on the parapet of the tower a small iron cross. I do not recollect to have seen such a one elsewhere. The orders of Knights Templar and of St. John of Jerusalem had the privilege of erecting crosses on their houses, as a warning, no doubt, to the tax gatherer, and perhaps the convent of Sion enjoyed a similar right. There was evidently some peculiarity in it, as we are told that the nuns of Sion, when they left England, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, took with them "the keys of Sion House and the iron cross at the top of the church there," by way of keeping up a right to their ancient possessions. It is not stated what became of the cross, but when one of the Dukes of Northumberland, the owners of

Sion House, visited the community at Lisbon, they said to him, "We still have the keys of Sion House:" to which he quietly replied, "Indeed, but I have altered the locks."

The subsequent history of Yeovil I may, if I am spared, enlarge upon hereafter. I must now hasten on to notice some of the places we are to visit.

Preston consists of two manors—Preston Bermondsey, which formerly belonged to the Cluniac Abbey of Bermondsey, and Preston Plucknet, so called from its early Lord, Alan de Plugenet. In this manor stand the church, the picturesque mediæval mansion, now a farm house, and a magnificent barn, with a fine open timber roof. There is a general impression, taken from Collinson, that this was a grange of the Abbey of Bermondsey, but it is erroneous; Preston Plucknet was always in lay hands. It belonged, in the reign of Richard II and his successor, to John Stourton, uncle of the first Lord Stourton, who was sometimes called Jenkin Stourton (a term, I am told by a lady of research, signifying Little John) and sometimes John Stourton of Preston, to distinguish him from other members of his family. He probably built the house and barn, and his residence here is noticed by Dr. Holland, a cotemporary of Camden, in his notes to the *Britannia*. John Stourton was a great landowner in this neighbourhood. He was the owner of Preston Plucknet, of Brympton and of Pendomer. He had three daughters, his co-heiresses—one by each of his three wives, amongst whom he divided these estates on their marriage. Joan carried Brympton to John Sydenham; Cicely, Preston to John Hill; and Alice, Pendomer to William Daubeney. He died in 1445 or 1446, and is believed to be the John Stourton who was buried in the priory church of Stavordale, which he had rebuilt and endowed with one-third of the manor of Thorn adjoining Preston.

Brympton, which you are to visit this afternoon, to my perhaps prejudiced eye, carries away the prize from all the mansions for which Somersetshire is famed. The little cruci-

form church and the picturesque so called chantry house, are interesting features in the picture, and the interior of the church deserves a careful examination; but as this and the other places in the programme have been already described in our journals, we must not waste our time in repetitions. On Thursday, after visiting Ashington church, where a few years ago you might have seen on the chancel floor an incised slab, of a belted knight, bearing on his shield the arms of Ralegh, we finish our excursions at the Hundred Stone, a small monolith standing on the summit of the hill, about one mile from Yeovil, and commanding a lovely and extensive view of the rich lowlands of Somerset and of the heights of Mendip beyond. On this spot the Courts Leet for The Hundred of Stone were formerly opened by proclamation, and although on that account it would have been more appropriate for the commencement of our proceedings, yet it is equally suitable for a finale, as it was the ancient place of execution for criminals convicted in the Lord's Court of Ievele. There, then, it will be my reluctant duty to bid you farewell, and to await your sentence on my many shortcomings; but whatever that may be, I can even now assure you that "I shall take a fond leave, and be loth to depart."

Professor Boyd Dawkins, f.r.s., had great pleasure in moving a vote of thanks to their President, for his extremely able and interesting address. He thought those who had listened to it that morning would go home wiser than they had come. The President had brought out a very important point in dealing with the bearing of the local history on the general history of the country. It seemed to him that the work which societies such as this, to which he had the honour to belong, had to do, was to collect those local materials which, for the most part, were lying ready to be collected, and to shape them in such a form that they might really become useful and accessible to the future writers of history of England. There was not a place in the country which did not contain little

details, of some sort or other, which were worthy of being collected. They had heard that morning that the written records of that part of the country were a varied series of records of troubles and struggles, and that those struggles did not in the least degree represent the progress of civilization. Their work, therefore, seemed to him to lie in supplying that void; and by their enquiries, and the use of the pickaxe and the shovel in working out the various habitations, camps, tombs, and Roman villas which lay around them, they might very easily find the materials for the filling of that gap. He alluded to the manner in which the researches which were being carried on in the ancient seat of civilization was revolutionizing the ancient history of Greece and Assyria, and said that what was being done in the ancient places on the Mediterranean might be done with respect to the district in which they lived in England. Their duty was to prepare, on a scale of at least six inches to the mile, a map of the county, in which every discovery bearing upon the ancient history might be rigidly and profusely recorded. In the neighbourhood in which they then stood he believed there was an enormons amount of information to be derived by a study of the place with respect to ancient history. They must remember that in the district around Yeovil there was an exceedingly long and exceedingly fierce conflict carried on between the Saxon invader and the Romano-British or the Celtic inhabitants, and he thought they could not fail to find all around them traces of the ancient inhabitants of the district, concerning whom history is silent. He did not believe the town of Yeovil derived its name from the river Yeo, as in nine cases out of ten such derivations were not correct, and it was only by going deep into the pedigree of the name that the real origin of names like that could be traced. In conclusion, he said he had much pleasure in proposing a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

The Rev. Professor EARLE, in seconding the resolution, said he had been much interested in what had been said

relative to the derivation of the word Yeovil. It occurred to him that it might possibly owe its origin partly to the river-name, which may perhaps have been the same as that of a well-known river in South Wales—the river Wye. Wye was British; in Welsh it was Gwy, and in the upper parts of the Wye a fall was called Rhaiader Gwy. He believed, with the President, that the name of the town was British, though, perhaps, with a Saxon termination.

The PRESIDENT briefly acknowledged the vote of thanks, and the meeting adjourned.

Time would not admit of visiting an old timber house in Middle Street—the George Inn, and the Castle Inn opposite, formerly a Chantry House. The party therefore proceeded direct to