

The President's Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

FIRST thanking you for the honour that you have done me, and then bespeaking your favourable consideration of such deficiencies as I may show in following, with unequal steps, the long line of my distinguished predecessors, I will make a few remarks on some portions of that entertainment, which the Honorary Secretaries and the Local Committees have provided for your enjoyment and instruction.

First, however, I will solicit your condolence on the loss which our Society has very recently sustained by the death of one of its Vice-Presidents, Lord Talbot de Malahide, who, in 1857, was President of this Society, and as lately as 1879 presided, with learning, courtesy, and tact, over the Royal Archæological Institute, when it met at Taunton.

Permit me to add that our visit on Wednesday to the iron mines on the Brendon Hills will remind many of us of the loss that we sustained about three years ago, by the death of

a very valuable Member of our Committee, General Munro. His learning, as a botanist, was known far beyond those circles that had the privilege of appreciating his endearing social qualities; and his organising skill once conducted a detachment of this Society to these very iron mines.

Your sympathies will justify or excuse these unavailing tributes.

But to return from my digression,—we are now about to penetrate the western highlands of Somerset, where we shall find streams that discharge themselves through the Exe, into the British, instead of the Bristol, Channel; though we may hardly reach Exmoor and the scenery of Whyte Melville's *Katerfelto*, and Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*.

The most primeval object which will claim our attention is a quarry near Brushford. It is rich in what geologists call the Devonian series—fossil molluscs and other very humble forms of animal life.

After these deposits (vast geological ages and changes intervening) a glacial period arrived, and the Weir Clive Rock, to which you will be conducted, is supposed to bear the marks of this time—to have become scored and polished by the slow, noiseless motion of a glacier, that, self-impelled, mysteriously, continuously, irresistibly crept forward on it. This question, we may feel assured, will now be determined.

On this action, Tyndall's *Glaciers of the Alps* is a great authority: but can not we boast our own Professor Boyd Dawkins, and our own Mr. Winwood?

Approaching the historical period, we come to Torr Steps, a foot-bridge of huge stones, crossing the River Barle. Its origin, which now seems lost in the night of ages, we may hope our experts may also be able to elucidate.

All these ancient objects are to be visited on the third day of our tour.

You will hear from others of the Roman and medieval surroundings of Wiveliscombe.

On one of its two adjacent Roman encampments we shall have the advantage of being instructed by Mr. Charles Elton; and any one who wishes to acquire a good idea of the general principles on which the Romans constructed their camps, will find them in one single page in the middle of the first chapter of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*—the sentence beginning, "The camp of a Roman legion presented the appearance of a fortified city."

Turning to modern Wiveliscombe, we find that Collinson, whose *History of Somerset* was published in 1791, states in it that "a considerable woollen manufacture has for more than two centuries been carried on in the town, and still flourishes:" and we may ask why the woollen trade has, for the most part, migrated from the West of Somerset to the West Riding of Yorkshire. Power looms, by superseding hand looms, would draw the trade to a coal-producing district. The merchants of Bristol, who were its principal dock-owners, used to pursue a narrow and exclusive policy in regard to dock dues. The West Riding abounded in coal; and canals and railroads brought Bradford and Leeds near, in point of expense or time, to the enterprising Atlantic port of Liverpool. Such, at least, is the answer that occurs to me. With regard to Wiveliscombe, I have been informed that the cloth fabric made here was exported for the use of the West Indian negroes, but after their emancipation there was no demand for it.

By the permission of Mr. Collard, an enthusiastic worshipper of two of the sister muses, we shall this day visit Abbotsfield. Nor is this the first obligation that we owe to him; for some years ago he lent to our exhibition in Taunton Castle the finest specimens from his priceless collection of modern paintings.

To-morrow, amongst other places, the Society will visit Raleigh's Cross, on the Brendon Hills, where there is an inn, at which I trust our Members and associates will do me the honour of partaking an unpretentious luncheon.

The mention of the name of Raleigh—a name that once

roused the enterprising spirit of the men of Cornwall, Devonshire, and Somerset, like the sound of a trumpet;—the name of the courtier of Queen Elizabeth,—the founder of Virginia,—the daring and skilful sea captain (sometimes, I fear, turned almost buccaneer),¹—the author of a passage unsurpassed in the English language for awful grandeur—I mean Sir Walter Raleigh's apostrophe at the end of his *History of the World*, commencing, "Oh! eloquent and mighty Death," and terminating with, "covered by *hic jacet*;"—that name should remind us that we are on the confines of the domain of a family that deserves to be enrolled amongst the most munificent and accomplished supporters of our Society.

Somerset and Northumberland, by the blood and lands of Raleigh of Nettlecombe and Blacket of Wallington, have striven, in friendly rivalry, which could most enrich the ancient and honourable Cornish stock of Trevelyan.

On Thursday, our third day, we shall reach Dulverton. Whether on arriving there we shall find that its church, like the majority of its visitors, is dedicated to St. Hubert, I cannot say; but the chase (of which that saint is the patron), whether of the red deer, the fox, or the otter, supplemented by fishing (for which the Barle and the Exe afford extraordinary facilities), has made Dulverton the perennial paradise of sportsmen.

Near here, at Pixton Park, resided for some years, renting it of the Earl of Carnarvon, Mr. Fenwick Bisset, who, till he entered Parliament, was master of the Somerset stag hounds—a sportsman and politician, whose recent illness has been to all parties in West Somerset a source of deep regret.

From an old local family of the name of Dyke, the Herberts of the Carnarvon branch inherited Pixton, near Dulverton; and Tetton, near Taunton. The heiress of the Dykes married Major Acland, and their daughter and eventual heiress brought

(1). See, *Visitation of Devon*, edited by Dr. J. Colby, p. 188 : and *Pulman's Book of the Axe*, p. 277.

these properties to her husband, the second Earl of Carnarvon. This Major Acland was wounded and taken prisoner in the war of American Independence. His young wife, Lady Harriet Acland, daughter of the first Earl of Ilchester, sought permission to pass through the enemy's lines to nurse her husband; and, for "*mentem mortalia tangunt,*" not only received it, but was treated by the enemy with extraordinary kindness and consideration.

Having had occasion to mention in connection the two names of Herbert and Acland, I will add that, when a youth at Oxford, I heard from the strangers' gallery in the House of Commons—that House of Commons being the ancient chapel of St. Stephen—a very able maiden speech, against the first Reform Bill, very gracefully delivered by Lord Porchester, father of the present Earl of Carnarvon; and, about the same period, I heard in the Oxford Union Debating Society an able speech, hardly perhaps as effective, also against the first Reform Bill, by his cousin, the present Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, then recently elected a Fellow of All Souls.

I venture to mention these personal recollections, being probably the only survivor who heard both these speeches.

The Earls of Carnarvon are cadets of the ancient and accomplished house of the Herberts, Earls of Pembroke.

Permit me to refer again, for a moment, to my Oxford recollections.

Imagine the statue of Antinous—tall, handsome, graceful, with face and eyes rather full. Imagine this statue enveloped in the rich black silk gown of a gentleman commoner of Oriel College, and you will have realised the Honourable Sidney Herbert of my Oxford recollections in 1831. His intellect, graceful, like his manners, was perhaps scarcely suited to the hard, straining work required by the office, eventually attained by him, of Secretary at War during the Crimean campaigns. Some severe reflections were made in the House of Commons (and by Roebuck, if I recollect rightly), on the deficiencies

of our troops in comforts and necessaries. Sidney Herbert resigned, was created Lord Herbert of Lea, in 1861, and died the same year. He was a younger brother of the Earl of Pembroke, and his son succeeded the elder brother, his uncle, in that old Earldom.

Then, near Dulverton we shall visit a mansion, which, till recently, was possessed by a family that might almost claim, like the Athenians of old, to be sprung from the very soil of the country which they inhabit. The name of the house is Combe: the name of its possessors from the time of Queen Elizabeth to a very recent period—a name derived from a manor on the sloping side of the river Parret, from which this family was originally disseminated—I need not here say is Syden-ham—Sydenham.

That family produced one of the most distinguished medical writers of the seventeenth century, Dr. Thomas Sydenham.

Combe has recently passed into the possession of another ancient Somerset family, that of Doddington. But we have reason to hope that we may be addressed by the present representative of the family of Sydenham of Combe—Rev. Charles Sydenham, Rector of Brushford.

In the Dulverton district, Harold and his family were powerful. The Domesday book records that in King Eadward's time Earl Harold held Dulverton and Cleve (for in that Norman survey Harold is never admitted to have been King), and one of Harold's sons is there stated to have held Nettlecombe. But Algar, son of Leofric, an enemy of the great Earl Godwin, Harold's father, held Porlock, the post which intervened between the Bristol Channel and Dulverton.

When Earl Godwin, through French influence and the machinations of personal enemies, had been banished by King Eadward, and was in the summer of 1052 collecting a fleet, with which to regain by force his former position, his son Harold came with some vessels to Porlock, and landed, probably with the object of buying or levying supplies there, or of

proceeding to Dulverton to obtain them from his own dependents; but the beacons blazed, and a large force assembled to oppose him.

He gained a victory, returned to his ships loaded with spoil, joined his father's ships, and the united fleet eventually reached London, where Earl Godwin was restored to royal favour.

The district having been a bloody, hard-contested battlefield, permit me, in conclusion, to quote from Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, a few lines, contrasting, *mutatis mutandis*, with change of names, the present-scene with the past:

Sweet Teviot! on thy silver tide
 The blazing bale-fires blaze no more;
 No longer steel-clad warriors ride
 Along thy wild and willow'd shore.
 Where'er thou wind'st, by dale or hill,
 All, all is peaceful, all is still,
 As if thy waves, since time was born,
 Since first they roll'd upon the Tweed,
 Had only heard the shepherd's reed,
 Nor started at the bugle-horn.

Mr. W. A. SANFORD, in proposing a vote of thanks to the President, said he thought the address a valuable contribution to our local knowledge. Mr. Surtees, as they all knew, had for many years been an active and most useful Member of the Society, and had taken the greatest interest in its Museum and its work generally.

Dr. PRIOR seconded the proposition, and it was carried with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT briefly acknowledged the compliment.

Mr. C. H. FOX remarked, with reference to the coarse woollen cloth trade, that what the President had said was correct. Old men were still living in the neighbourhood who had been wool workers at Wiveliscombe. One had told him that on the river Tone there were no fewer than six fulling mills. Besides these coarse blue stuffs, there was a considerable manufacture of frieze and serge. There were about two

thousand people engaged in the serge manufacture in Taunton alone. The industry still flourished at Wellington, and that town held its own with the West Riding.

Mr. O. W. MALET, in a few remarks, said the Members may be congratulated that the debt incurred for the purchase of the Castle was now so nearly cancelled. This had been accomplished from the income derived from the property, aided by the handsome bequest of Sir Charles Trevelyan, and other voluntary donations, and it was not likely that the Society would be again called on for this fund. It must, however, be borne in mind that the annual subscription to the Society was a very small one. It was fixed before this property was acquired. Just now some rather extensive repairs were found to be necessary, and the fund for such a purpose could not be provided, without either delaying the liquidation of the present debt, or incurring a new one. The principal requirements were,—(1) the restoration of the roof of the geological room; (2) the repair of the muniment room; and (3) the rebuilding of the turret gateway. The last named, Col. Pinney has kindly offered to restore at his own cost, and has given £125 for the purpose. Towards the others, subscriptions were solicited. These improvements were proposed in accordance with suggestions made by Mr. Ferrey, who had prepared a report.

Mr. SANFORD said that Mr. Ferrey's report exactly coincided with his own opinion, and he thought the manner suggested was the best way of repairing the roof. He would propose that a committee—a small committee—should be appointed to consider any such improvements.

Mr. ELTON seconded, and the proposition was carried.