

The PRESIDENT then delivered the following

## Inaugural Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT is with sincere pleasure that I meet the Members of the Somerset Archæological Society in this ancient city of Wells, the ecclesiastical metropolis of our county. It is with no less sincerity that I acknowledge my own insufficiency to discharge the duties of your President as I think they ought to be discharged. I confess to a genuine delight in archæological pursuits: I confess to taking a deep interest in the scientific investigation of facts buried under the dust and rubbish of centuries. I think I could pursue any inquiry into the past for which I had materials at my command, and shout *ἐύρηκα*, if the enquiry were successful, in the midst of any civil or ecclesiastical battle that might be going on—for such pursuits form a world of their own, above and independent of the world of politics and polemics,—and so far I will not disclaim some of the qualifications which ought to be found in your President. But when I ask myself whether I have that minute and accurate knowledge of *facts* in the different departments of archæology which enables me to distinguish, to compare, to classify, and to arrange such facts in their due order, and in their proper compartments; when I ask myself whether my memory is charged with a sufficient amount of historical, linguistic, or architectural knowledge to enable me to throw light upon obscure events, or interpret the revelations of obscure monuments and yet obscurer words; when I ask myself whether my eye has been sufficiently trained to read in the various objects of archæological interest what is to be read in them, and thence to infer justly what ought to be inferred from them, I find myself utterly at fault, and have

only to throw myself, as I do without reserve, on your kindness and indulgence.

Moreover since I have been a resident in the county of Somerset I have had no leisure whatever to pursue what used in Suffolk to be my favourite recreation. With the exception of Mr. Freeman's admirable History of Wells Cathedral, a paper or two in your "Proceedings" on the Combes of the district, Mr. Geo. Williams' interesting book on my great predecessor, Bishop Beckington, Mr. Parker's contributions to the topography of Wells, and a very few other works, my archæological reading has fairly come to an end. However without wearying you with further excuses I will do my best to discharge the duties of the office which I have the honour to fill.

I interpret the fact of our meeting at Wells as meaning that you wish to make the study of the Cathedral under Mr. Irvine's auspices, and with the benefit of his great and exact knowledge of all the details of its magnificent structure, the main features of this year's meeting. And certainly to gain an exact knowledge of the biography, if I may so speak, of this grand and beautiful building which must have taxed all the powers of its builders for a couple of centuries, will be an object worthy of the occasion. The progress of a great Cathedral, the mechanical skill and force displayed in it, the features which it has in common with other Cathedrals, English and foreign, and those which are peculiar to itself, the religious sentiments which animated its founders, the religious opinions which find their expression in the broader features of its design, and in the minuter details of ornament and decoration, the illustration given by it of the relative power and authority and wealth of different classes in those days—all these are so much a part of the history of the times, and of the country itself in those times, that an accurate knowledge of the Cathedral is no mean contribution to history itself. And then there are its thousand-and-one lessons in taste,

in beauty, in proportion, in construction, in short in the noble art of ARCHITECTURE, one of the grandest outputs of what there is of creative power in man. But as I have no contribution to make to the history of the Cathedral I will say no more about it.

The Palace will I hope also come in for some share of your attention, and receive some additional illustration from your inspection of it. It is certainly a remarkable specimen of the domestic architecture of the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, and presents some good features of each of those times, from Jocelyn down to Bishop Mountague, from Early English to Jacobean. Its moat and wall and gate tower are remarkably perfect, and I hope that our valued friend Mr. Clark, of Dowlais, will throw a little of his magnesian light upon its merits as a fortress and castle. I must only ask you *not* to look at the drawbridge and portcullis, and hasten to acknowledge that they are a great sham, which almost amounts, in the midst of so much that is true and real, to a great shame. But it can't be helped.

The ruins of Bishop Burnell's great banqueting hall, with its beautiful windows and its tragic recollections of good Abbot Whiting's shameful trial and judicial murder, will not escape your notice. The more ancient hall or undercroft of Bishop Jocelyn, whatever was its original purpose, will, I hope, supply something more solid than sights and memories, and at all events will give you a warm welcome. The Chapel I shall show you with regret. Its modern restoration is utterly unworthy of the great beauty of its ancient roof and windows.\* But it has not been in my power to do anything to it.

Passing from the buildings of Wells I shall indicate a few points on which my curiosity has been excited, and on which

\* This refers exclusively to the mean character of the wood work, and to the stained glass.

I hope it will be allayed by some of our learned friends in the course of the present meeting.

As we are at Wells, both actually and in the progress of my speech, I will mention first in order, as affording matter for interesting inquiry, the relations of the Bishop to the city and its municipality. The city, as you are doubtless aware, owed its first charter to Bishop Robert (1137-1165), and this charter was confirmed and enlarged by his two immediate successors, Reginald and Savaric. It is thought to have been by the influence of their successor, Bishop Jocelyn, that the first Royal Charter was granted by King John in 1202. Here then we have four successive bishops interesting themselves in the freedom and commercial prosperity of the burgesses of Wells, and in so doing they were fulfilling righteously their duty as the LORDS of Wells. It is particularly to their credit that not content with giving a charter of their own, which as Wells was a *villa Episcopi* they were entitled to do, they procured further a Royal Charter, which conferred fuller privileges upon the burgesses. "The Boroughs, Vills, or Communes of the feudal lords, had privileges very inferior to those of the Royal Communes," says Houard, speaking of those in France, and the same was true in England. Besides other advantages they were judged in a number of petty causes by their own laws, ministered by their own chief, in a court of their own. The head of the corporation in the French ville or commune was always under the three races called a *mayor*, but the name does not appear to have been common in England till the time of Richard II. They were called aldermen, seneschals, masters, bailiffs, provosts. The chief officer of the Corporation of Wells before the charter of Elizabeth was called sometimes seneschal, and sometimes master. Such a corporation then was established in Wells by the Bishops their feudal lords, and no doubt they had in so doing the benevolent design so well expressed in Beaumanoir's collection of Rules (1284), where it is said "Every lord who



has villes with communes (or commonalties) under him ought thoroughly to inform himself of the state of each such ville, and how it is governed by its mayor, and by those whose duty it is to protect it and administer its affairs; so that the rich may know that if they do any wrong they will be grievously punished, and that the poor in the said villes may earn their bread in peace." May I observe by the way that it is very pleasant to find such goodly maxims and theories in the midst of all the roughness and oppression of those early centuries, and add one more from Glanville's Preface to the Laws of King David of Scotland, somewhat in the same spirit:—"The King's Majesty must not only be glorious with arms to put down those who rise in rebellion against himself and his kingdoms, but it must be armed with good laws for the peaceable government of the people who are his subjects."

I am afraid the relations between the Bishop and the commonalty of Wells were not always quite so cordial as one could have wished, because the Bishops would interfere and bring matters into their own courts which the burgesses wished to be tried in the city court. But for all that let the four bishops who enfranchised the town have the praise that is their due.

Before quitting the subject of the relations of the Bishops to the corporation I would call attention to the curious circumstance that the names of the municipal officers were not Saxon but French or Norman. The seneschal, the commonalty, the burgesses, as, elsewhere, the provost, and the mayor, were not like the alderman, the reeve, the bedell, the catchpole, &c., of Saxon origin, but must have been importations from abroad. There is also a striking resemblance between many of the early English and Scotch municipal laws and those found in the capitularies by which the French communes were governed.

I have alluded to some differences which arose between the Bishops and the burgesses. I wonder whether the Palace

moat and walls had anything to do with these differences, or what gave rise to so grand and costly a construction. Certainly protected by that broad and deep moat, with those massive walls pierced all round for the marksmen, with the flanking towers, at the several corners commanding all the approaches, and the strong gate tower with its portcullis and *real* drawbridge, the Bishop must have slept in perfect security, and been able to defy all his foes: while his table would be well furnished with ducks and swans and geese for Feast days, and abundance of fish for all Fasts of the church. Others suppose that it was the dread of the infuriated monks of Bath which led Bishop Ralph to fortify the Palace, while others again think it was done with reference merely to the "turbulent spirit" of the times. However, whatever his motive was, it was a work worthy of Ralph of Shrewsbury, to whom it is expressly ascribed in the *Anglia Sacra*, as quoted by Mr. Freeman. "Episcopale palatium apud Welliam forti muro lapideo circumcinxit, et aquam undique circumduxit," and again more exactly "Palatium episcopale Wellense muro lapideo batellato et cornellato cum fossatis claudere fecit."

And this leads me to notice, as a marked feature in the succession of the Bishops of Wells, that-almost all our celebrities derived their chief distinction from their great material works. If we seek among them any of the great divines who, either before or after the Reformation, exercised a powerful influence upon the theology of the English Church, or any who for great learning or eloquence or statesmanship stand out as prominent in the history of the country, we shall seek in vain. Wolsey and Laud were far too short a time Bishops of Bath and Wells to be in any way identified with the see; Bishop Still, described by Sir John Harington as a man "to whom he never came but he grew more religious, and from whom he never went but he parted better instructed," and who is described by Fuller as "no less famous for a preacher than a disputant," was an eminently respectable divine; Bishop

Lake described by Fuller as a "living comment upon Saint Paul's character of a Bishop," and who has left behind some valuable sermons very illustrative of the Church discipline of the first quarter of the 17th century, was also an ornament to the see. But Ken is the only one who stands out among the records of the whole Church conspicuous for the episcopal virtues of learning, piety, charity, self-denial, and for his saintly life, and his is the name of which the see has most cause to be proud. All the other great names in our roll, Jocelyn, Burnell, Ralph of Shrewsbury, Bubwith, Beckington, are famous for their magnificent buildings, and have their monuments in different portions of the Cathedral, the Vicar's Close, the Palace, the gates, the market-place, and the almshouses of the city. The truth is that for several centuries this was the main direction which intellectual vigour and piety took in churchmen; and the near relation of architecture to religion in those ages is another very closely related fact. This is not the place nor the opportunity for entering into the philosophy of it. But I may just add that such books as the Chronicle of Jocelyn de Brakland, and the language of many of the ancient charters, seem to show us that the men of those days looked upon the patron saints of cathedrals and churches as the actual proprietors of them. Their faith, or fancy, brought St. Andrew or St. Peter into very close proximity with the buildings named after them, and the lands attached to them. They conceived the Saints as deeply interested in these possessions, and as deriving honour and dignity and pleasure from them, and as punishing all those who robbed or alienated their possessions. Hence their own reverence for the Saints, an important part of medieval religion, led them to beautify, to adorn, to enrich, to increase, to protect, the buildings and the lands belonging to them. I conceive that it was this spirit which first gave the impetus to ecclesiastical building, though doubtless the passion for building lasted long after the spirit which gave it birth had ceased to live.

To pass on to one or two other matters of archæological interest. It would be, I think, a considerable gain if our Society could prepare and publish two or three maps of Somerset showing the state of the country at different times with respect to the Roman occupation, roads, mines, towns, the sea-border, islands, &c. ; with regard to the boundaries of Britons, and Saxons later, with the names of places, rivers, mountain ranges, &c., and the extent of the great forests of Selwood, Mendip, North Petherton, Neroche, and Exmoor. A good list too of all the places mentioned in ancient records, with the modern name added, would be of considerable use.

A good collection might also be made of all the names of hills, rivers, and places, classified as Celtic, Saxon, or otherwise, with the probable etymology of each, and above all a comparison with identical or nearly identical names in other parts of England or of the continent. For instance we have several places in the county, including the county town of Ilchester (Ivel-chester, or Givel-chester), compounded with the Il, or Ivel, or Givel (for the name is written in all three ways); and the Ile, which gives their name to Ilminster, Ile Brewers, Ile Abbots, Ilton, and Ilford, is doubtless only a variation of the same word. Both run into the Perrott. I strongly suspect too that Yeovil is merely a corruption of Givel or Gifle, or Gyfle, as the name of the river is written in a charter of Alfred, and in a will about 100 years later. Well, in Bedfordshire there is a river Ivell, and on, or close to it, are two towns anciently called Nortgivell and Sudgivell, and in the 15th century North and South Yevill (compare Yeovil), or Yevele, now corrupted to Northill and Southill. It is obvious that these are the same words. Slightly varied forms of the same name occur in Yorkshire—Ghividale, North Geveldale, Gevedale, &c. There is also in Sweden a river Gefle, and a town of the same name. Somersetshire is also rich in local prefixes and terminations, as *pen*, *tor*, *pill*, *lynch*, *port*, *ea*, *creech*, *cot* (Dulcot, Draycot, Foxcot), *over* (Northover, South-



over, *combe*, &c., the thorough elucidation of which could not fail to throw light both upon the language and history of the early settlers. I believe much has been done lately by the judicious use of such materials by Celtic scholars\* to restore the early history of the Picts and Scots. The truth is that the names of places, and especially of rivers and hills, are the most faithful memorials of ancient races. When all other monuments have perished, these survive, and like the fossilized print of the foot of the batrachian, or of the drops of rain on some ancient sea-shore, hand down to us through a succession of centuries, the remembrance of some long-forgotten fact. If handled discreetly and with discrimination I consider that proper names are among the most precious records we possess.

We have however in our county, owing doubtless to its peculiar conformation, other very early monuments of ancient and perhaps extinct races. The splendid camps which crown many of our hills, as Cadbury, Maesbury, and very many more, the hut circles on Ben Knoll, the stones of Stanton Drew, &c., are doubtless coeval with some of the tribes whose speech is preserved in proper names; and I do not see why some progress should not be made, with the help of a wide and accurate comparative archæology, in sorting together the names and things which are coeval, and even in obtaining some knowledge of the history of the people.

Two or three peculiarities in Somersetshire have struck me which I will just mention without dwelling upon them. One is the want of a capital. Somerton and Ilchester, two of the oldest towns in the county, neither of them represent any great vigour in forming central tribal communities. Another is the absence of any large territorial lords making their residence in the county and signaling it by extensive castles and domains. Montacute and Brimpton are very fine Tudor houses; but except that most beautiful of all residences,

\* Dr. Skeene, Dr. Stuart, Dr. Reeves, &c. *Quarterly Review*, July, 1873.

Dunster Castle, I cannot think of any very ancient baronial residence. There are still, I fancy, an unusual number of small properties, and of independent yeomen. One more peculiarity is the number of parishes with double names, the latter name indicating the family which held the manor. Shepton Mallet, Shepton Montague, and Shepton Beauchamp, Curry Rivel, Combe Florey, Withiel Florey, Orchard Portman, &c., are instances of what I mean. It seems at first sight a habit inconsistent with the other tendency I noted of maintaining small and independent holdings.

I have sometimes thought that a pleasant way of illustrating county family history would be a collection of well-written tales in the style of the historical novel, which should bring together members of families actually flourishing together at the epoch chosen, which should describe the state of the country at the time, and make use of historical events—Perkin Warbeck's claim to the Crown, Henry VII.'s visit to Wells, the intrusion of the puritan Burgess into the "late cathedral," or, to come down later, the incidents of Monmouth's rebellion, and Ken's pious visits to the poor prisoners at Wells. A powerful pen, like that which gave us *Lorna Doone*, might pitch on many a scene among the Mendips or Quantocks worthy of being described, and people them with suitable heroes and heroines; or the venerable precincts of Glastonbury might be made alive again with monks and mitred abbots, who should play their part in some drama of fictitious life; or a Dickens might draw out the peculiar features of the mining population, or the turf-cutters in the bog. There is abundance of varied material. Or our novelist might go back to the days of Arthur, or those of Alfred, and dress up some of the dry lessons of archæology with the pleasant sauce of an ingenious fancy, and a lively imagination.

But I have a more serious suggestion to make in conclusion. I believe there are in the possession of the Dean and Chapter,

and also under the custody of the Registrar of the Diocese, some most valuable MSS. which would throw a flood of light upon the history of Wells and of the whole county. They are taken such care of now that nobody ever sees them or is a bit the wiser for them. I have little doubt that the Dean and Chapter would give every facility for the publication of such extracts from those in their possession as would be important for historical purposes. I would do the same for those in my Registry. It would be a worthy labour for our Society to assist in giving them to the archæological world. For a true reflection of the mind and sentiments of a certain age, and a faithful picture of the events and circumstances of the times, nothing can compare with original documents. Get the permission of the Chapter, get a competent person to make the selection, raise a guarantee fund for the expense, procure a competent editor, and the thing is done.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, apologising for having detained you so long, I invite you to come to the Chapter House, and to examine for yourselves the exquisite beauty of the Cathedral Church of St. Andrew in Wells.

Col. PINNEY proposed and Mr. E. A. FREEMAN seconded a vote of thanks to the President, for his Lordship's able and interesting address. Carried with much applause.

The Society then adjourned to the Chapter House of the Cathedral, which had been kindly opened to them by the Very Rev. the Dean and the Chapter. There Mr. Irvine gave a most striking lecture on the "Architectural History of the Cathedral," which will be found in Part II. This lecture formed the principal feature of the meeting, and was illustrated by numerous plain and carefully prepared diagrams drawn to scale; the most important of these are by the kindness of the lecturer published in the present volume. The paper had scarcely ended when the hour of Evensong came. At the close of the service,

which was largely attended by the Members of the Society, Mr. Irvine conducted a considerable crowd from point to point of the buildings, and illustrated his paper by the very stones themselves.

A large number of ladies and gentlemen dined together at the Swan Hotel, under the presidency of the Bishop. After dinner the High Sheriff, Mr. R. K. MEADE KING, proposed the health of the President. The Bishop returned thanks and proposed the health of Mr. Irvine, and, both as the Bishop of the Diocese and the President of the Society, thanked him for the lucid and interesting history which he had given of the mother Church of St. Andrew. Other toasts were also given.