

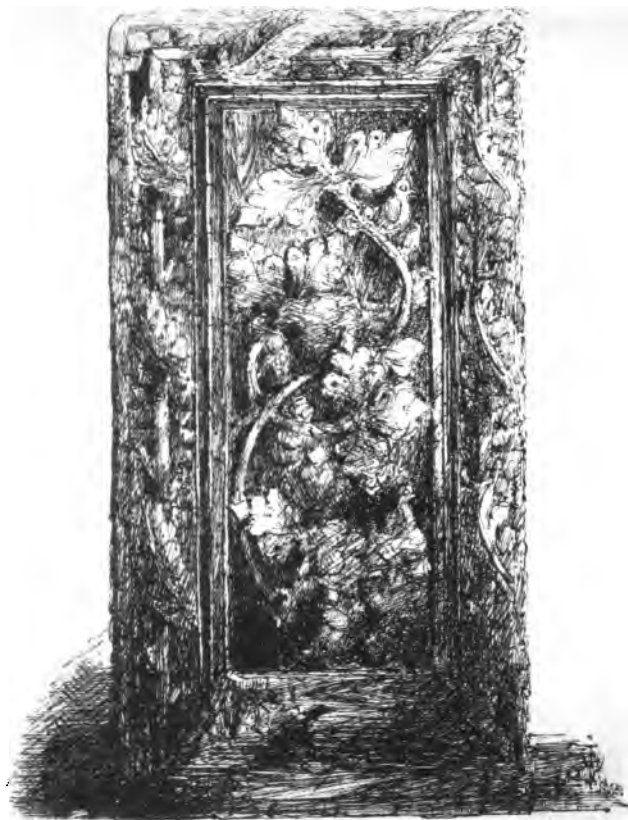
SECOND DAY.

Wednesday, September 13th, 1854.

The Excursion.

AFTER partaking of a sumptuous breakfast, provided by the hospitality of Robert Badcock, and Eales White, Esqs., the Bailiffs of the borough, the party proceeded on an excursion to Kingston: the church (fully described by the Rev. Eccles Carter, in his Paper, published in the proceedings of the Society, for the year 1853) having been visited, they proceeded to Broomfield, a small church of Perpendicular character, with earlier portions, chiefly remarkable for the beauty of its bench heads, two of which, as well as one from Kingston, are given in the illustrations of the present volume.

From Broomfield church the company proceeded to Fyne Court, the residence of Andrew Crosse, Esq., where ample provision had been made for their hospitable reception. The treasures of Mr. Crosse's valuable Museum were exhibited, comprising a very extensive and varied



BROOMFIELD.



COWELL'S ANASTATIC PROCESS ENGRAVED

SOMERSETSHIRE BENCH ENDS:

KINGSTON.

collection of the mineral productions of the county. To these were added some of the results of his electrical experiments, illustrating the origin and formation of metallic lodes; several powerful galvanic batteries were in active operation, and, under Mr. Crosse's direction, served to explain and illustrate the *modus operandi* of many of the occult phenomena of nature.

From thence the company proceeded to Cothelstone Beacon, where the following Exposition of the View therefrom was made by the Rev. F. Warre :—

“I need not tell you that the view before you is one of great extent, of varied character, and extreme beauty; it is bounded on the east by the long ridge of Mendip; on the west by the heights of Brendon; on the south by Blagdon, and on the north by the Severn sea, beyond which appears the coast of Wales; while to the south-west, at times, may be seen Haldon, and even the Peaks of Tors on Dartmoor. It embraces a variety of extent hardly to be equalled in the south of England; but to us, a Society of Archæologists, its beauty is not its only charm. Its boundaries include many spots of historical interest, which it will be my endeavour on the present occasion to point out,—a task for which my only qualification is, that, being a native of this neighbourhood, I am familiar with the scene before us.

“At a period before the times of written history, this extensive tract of country was inhabited by several tribes of Celtic origin—members of the great Loegrian family—one of the three original tribes mentioned in the Welsh triads as the earliest occupiers of the British Isles; on the extreme east lie the territories of the Hedui; farther to the south were the Durotriges and Morini; to the south and west were seated the Danmonii; and that northern coast

was the habitation of the Silures; whilst below us extends the Gwlad-yr-hav, the 'summer-fields' of the Celtic poets, which, with the heights of the Quantock and the northern coast of Somerset, was the residence of the western Cangi.

"I am well aware that my learned friend and colleague, Mr. Jones, will tell you that the 'summer-field' is a false translation of the Celtic name, and that Gwlad-yr-havren simply signifies 'the land on the coast of the Severn;' and it would, indeed, be presumptuous in me to doubt the correctness of his interpretation; but when I look down on that beautiful plain, I hope to be excused if (for the day at least), I hold the more poetical translation to be the right one, and believe with Harne, that the Cangi named their beautiful vale and plain 'the laughing summer-field.'

"Far again to the south-east extend the grassy hills and undulating downs of Dorset and Wilts, for centuries the battle-field of the Belgæ, those men of Galedin, who, having been received by the British tribes in peace, repaid their hospitality by wresting from them a large portion of their most valuable territory. Several of the mountain strongholds of these early nations are in sight—Worle Hill, Hamdon, Neroche, Elworthy, and Dowsborough are all crowned with military works of these extinct nations, all of whom were soon to fall under the irresistible power of the Roman armies.

"About the year 40, Ostorius Scapula took military possession of the coast from the mouth of the Avon to the æstuary of the Uxella, and having crossed the æstuary, probably completed the conquest of the Cangi, on the very spot on which we are now standing. I know that this is controverted, and that many historians and archæologists hold that the battle, which was fought within sight of the 'Mare quod aspicit Hiberniam,' was fought against the

Cangi of Shropshire; but, in order to see that sea, Ostorius must have penetrated beyond their territories into those of the Ordovices, while here, on a line of hills which the learned Camden states to have been occupied by the Cangi, he had seen the sea which may well be said to look towards Ireland, immediately below him. These barrows are the marks of battle. Roman and British ornaments have been found in the immediate vicinity; and there is the Uxella to the mouth of which we know that he penetrated.

“During 400 years of Roman occupation, no doubt the inhabitants of the district before us partook of that civilization, and admixture of Roman blood, which converted the barbarian Celt into the polished Romanized Briton. The British foss-way leading from Bath to Seaton was adopted by the Romans, and became one of their great highways. Cadbury, Ham Hill, and Neroche were occupied by their troops. The mines of Mendip and Brendon were extensively worked; and even on Blackdown there have been found traces of mining operations. Villas have been discovered at Pitney, Coker, Combe St. Nicholas, and without doubt existed in many other places. Roman coins have been found from time to time, particularly at Conquest, immediately below us, and at Holway, a little beyond Taunton, at both which places large deposits of money have been discovered; those at Conquest in such numbers, and in such a perfect state of preservation, as to render it probable that a mint existed there, in confirmation of which, some years ago several large balls or lumps of metal resembling lead, probably the debased silver so often used in the Roman coinage, are said to have been found there, though I have not as yet succeeded in tracing any of them.

"It was during this period that Christianity was introduced into this Island, and the first Christian Church in Britain built at Glastonbury. The history of this venerable and magnificent establishment, the burial-place of the British hero, King Arthur, the refuge of the historian Gildas, the residence of St. Patrick, the cradle of St. Dunstan, patronized and enriched by Ina, Canute, Alfred, and later kings; whose mitred Abbot is said to have been able to bring 15,000 fighting men into the field; the scene of the brutal murder of the high spirited and conscientious Abbot Whiting, is too well known to Archæologists to require that I should now do more than point out its situation.

"In the year 557, Ceawlin, the great West-Saxon Conqueror, over-ran the eastern part of the county. Kenewalch, in the year 680, defeated the Bretwallas at Pen, and drove them to this side of the Parret; and in the year 702, Ina founded the Castle of Taunton, to strengthen his western frontier against the subjects of Geraint, Prince of Cornwall, whose dominions still extended as far eastward as Blackdown and Exmoor.

"There at the junction of the Thone and Parret, is Athelney, described by Asser, as an island on the borders of Britain, where the indomitable Alfred lay hid while the Danish pirates ravaged the country far and wide; and farther to the east is Aller, where, after his defeat, the heathen Guthrum was baptized; and again, nearer the ridge of Mendip, is Wedmore, the royal residence of his immortal conqueror, where a deposit of the coins of Canute the Dane was recently discovered, some of which are in our Museum in Taunton.

"The district before us, indeed, appears to have been a favorite one with the West Saxon monarchs. South

Petherton, Wedmore, and Taunton, before the latter manor was granted to the Church of Winchester, were all royal residences. The family of Earl Godwin was possessed of large manors on the coast of the Severn ; and here, on the Steep Holmes, Githa, the mother of Harold, took refuge after the defeat and death of her son at Hastings. On that coast too, near the eastern boundary of the view, the two sons of Harold landed with a body of Saxon fugitives, and raised the retainers of their father in a desperate attempt to restore the fallen fortunes of their family ; and from that point sallied forth Drogo de Montacute, at the head of his Norman chivalry, met them between Congresbury and Worle, scattered their forces to the four winds of heaven, and drove them back foiled and defeated to their ships. There is in the Museum at Taunton an arrow-head of about that date, found near Worle, which may probably have been shot during their disastrous flight.

“ On this side Minehead lies Dunster, where the Norman Moion had his castle, which in the reign of Edward III. passed into the possession of the Luttrells, who still inhabit its majestic towers ; and nearer to us again is Williton, the residence of Reginald Fitzurse, who, with Brito, Moreville, and Tracey, at a hasty word of Henry II., sacrilegiously murdered, before the altar of his own cathedral, the Archbishop A’Beckett, afterwards canonized as St. Thomas of Canterbury ; and a little beyond that hill stands Woodspring Priory, founded by William de Courteney, in expiation of the murder committed by his ancestor Tracey, where no doubt was originally deposited that very curious Reliquary now in our Museum, which was found a few years since, built into the north wall of Kewstoke Church, containing an oaken cup, in which may

be discerned a small quantity of brown dust, the residuum of human blood, which may be that of A'Beckett himself. Here again stands Cannington, where the Fair Rosamond, the victim of a King's lust and a Queen's vengeance, passed her noviciate, and where a few years since a ring, apparently of the 13th century, now in the possession of Mr. Stradling, was found, on which were engraved the armorial bearings of the house of Clifford.

"From this spot too may be seen the sites of no less than four of the mediæval castles of Somerset,—Dunster, the stronghold of the Moions; Stoke Courcey, the residence of the De Courcey family; Bridgwater, founded in the reign of Henry I., by William Brewere; and Taunton, founded by Ina in the year 702, destroyed by his sister Ethelburga about twenty years after, and restored by William Gifford, Bishop of Winchester, in the reign of Henry the First.

"I am not aware of any event of importance having taken place within sight of this place during the 13th, 14th, and the earlier part of the 15th century, sufficient to invest any particular spot with historical interest. There indeed lies Halsway, the hunting seat of Cardinal Beaufort; but grand indeed as a mediæval hunting scene must have been in these beautiful hills, and though painter or poet might rejoice at the recollection of the stately Prelate, surrounded by knights and esquires, and, if all tales be true, with ladies fair, sallying forth with hound and horn to rouse the good red deer in the woods of Cocker Coombe and Sevenwells, Halsway, exclusive of its architectural value, has little historical interest attached to it beyond that of having been the occasional residence of the celebrated Cardinal; and in this it is perhaps surpassed by Milverton, where there is a house built for himself by the more celebrated Wolsey.

"Those beautiful towers which we see on every side, have been supposed by some to bear witness to the gratitude of the Tudor Monarchs to the faithful West for its support of the house of Lancaster; but this I fear is but a fancy. Henry VII. shewed more anxiety to drive Perkin Warbeck and his Cornish supporters from Taunton, than to reward those who had supported him in his difficulties.

"Here immediately below us is Cothelston, the residence of Sir John Stawel, the daring royalist leader in the great Rebellion; and from Taunton it was that Blake led the Parliamentary army to destroy his house and to besiege the stronghold of Dunster. Tradition says that the arms of Sir John Stawel's forces were kept in Bishop's Lydeard tower, and his levies made in a field which still bears the name of "Standards;" and the skirmish at Lydeard between him and Blake was described to me by an old man who had heard it from his great-grandfather, as graphically as if he had witnessed it himself. He assured me that when Blake's men and Sir John's rode through Bishop's Lydeard street together, they made more noise than he had ever heard in his life; and I can easily conceive that it was not a very quiet ride. Gore and Cothelston were both the scenes of judicial murder during the bloody assize of Jeffries; a gentleman of the name of Gore having been executed and his limbs nailed to a tree at the former place, and two more, Bovet and Blackmore having been hanged on the arch before old Cothelston house.

"The time will not permit me at present to do more than to call your attention to those two columns, that at Burton Pynsent, erected by that great statesman, Lord Chatham; the other, above Wellington, raised to the memory of the greatest statesman and warrior that England, and perhaps the world, has ever seen."

The party then proceeded along the ridge of Quantocks, to Will's-neck, and thence to Crowcombe, and returned by Cothelston House, where refreshments had been provided for them by E. J. Esdaile, Esq.
