

Third Quarterly Meeting held at Frome, July 10th, 1850.

*F. H. Dickinson, Esq. Vice President,
in the Chair.*

Morning Meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN briefly addressed the meeting on the benefits likely to be expected from the advancement of the Society, and was followed in the same path by Mr. C. E. GILES.

The Rev. H. D. WICKHAM read a paper on the parish church of Frome, now known as *St. Peter's*, but believed to have been originally dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The earliest church occupying the same site was built by Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, A.D. 705. The present building, about 135 feet in length, and 48 in breadth, was constructed at different periods during the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries. Under the eastern window repose the remains of the venerable Bishop Kenn. A brass plate to his memory has been lately placed in the chancel under a beautiful obituary window, also to his memory, presented by the Marchioness of Bath.

After the reading of the paper the members visited the Church, where they could not fail to be struck with the contrast which the recent restoration of the chancel presents to the dilapidated state of the other portion of the building, and the unsightly deformities which the laxity of the past century suffered to gather round the body of the building, and which we may hope the devotion and better taste of the present may speedily sweep away.

Evening Meeting.

Dr. HARRISON favoured the meeting with an elaborate paper on *Radiata*, or Radiated Animals, of which there is a valuable collection in the Museum of the Frome Literary and Scientific Institution.

Dr. WOODFORDE adverted to the importance of keeping meteorological registers throughout the county, and expressed his readiness to co-operate with any who might wish to enter on the work.

The Rev. Dr. GILES proposed in a few words to point out the masterly skill with which King Alfred planned and executed, in the immediate neighbourhood of Frome, the military manœuvres by which the Danes were defeated at Eddington, and the whole of England, for many years after, saved from their ravages.

In the first week of January A.D. 872, whilst Alfred was reposing with a small band of faithful soldiers at Chippenham, a royal seat of the kings of Wessex, Guthrum the Dane came upon him with overwhelming forces, and after an obstinate fight, drove the king into the wilds and woods of Selwood Forest. At the same instant, three other Danish chiefs, Hinguar, Hubba, and Halfden, fell upon Earl Ordgar, on the northern coast of Devon. Here, however, the enemy were defeated. The castle of Kinwith gave refreshment and courage to the English, until they sallied forth and cut the Danes in pieces. The king knowing that Somersetshire, Dorsetshire, and Devonshire formed the strength and now indeed the last hope of his kingdom, caused his men to disperse westward, so that the enemy, finding no traces of a foe remaining, gave themselves up to pleasure, and seem to have been completely

lulled into security; for, five months afterwards, they were surprised by Alfred, at not more than 20 miles from the place where he had been beaten.

It is the popular belief that Alfred lived at Athelney during the interval, concealed in the guise of a peasant. He was there concealed, it is true, but it was in the guise, not of a peasant, but of a warrior. He constructed on that small island a fortress, and a bridge defended with towers. Here he made head for awhile, until his emissaries informed him that his faithful men of Somerset were ready to obey his call; perhaps also, until the Earl of Devon, with his victorious troops, could join him. Then was the time for action. Riding in the gray of morning 40 miles from Athelney to Brixton Deveril, he found himself there when night closed, at the head of a gallant army. By what means could that army be so suddenly collected and concentrated upon one point? This difficulty has never been cleared up by those who have written on the deeds of Alfred. I will attempt to solve it with the aid of popular tradition. On a headland within a few miles of Brixton Deveril, is a high tower, built to commemorate the raising of Alfred's standard, (so the country people have handed it down,) just before the last campaign with the Danes. Alfred passed this lofty hill in his rapid morning ride to Brixton. It is seen we all know, to the distance of 50 miles on almost every side, down into Dorsetshire, away to the east into Wiltshire, and throughout all the lowlands of Somersetshire to Quantock and the Bristol Channel. Everywhere it is seen except in the valley where the Danish army lay, between Westbury and Eddington, as far as the unlucky battle field of Chippenham. Here then is the solution of Alfred's wonderful success, a manœuvre which equals Napoleon's at Austerlitz, and

might have taught many a modern general the irresistible effect which is produced by numbers brought to bear upon a single point. King Alfred's standard acting as a beacon, unseen by the enemy alone, brought his men, each moving on his own radius of the circle, to the centre, where the king was waiting; a rapid march along the hill country, enabled him on the second morning to seize on the eminence where stands the mound called Bratton Castle, and the Danes almost terrified into defeat before the armies met, submitting to their master, suffered themselves to be made cultivators of those lands, which they had come to burn and destroy.

Dr. WOODFORDE, in confirmation of this view of Alfred's strategy, reported that a custom prevails at Taunton down to the present time, of holding a ball, in the cold season of the year, called the Ashen Fagot Ball, in memory of the delight which King Alfred's men, coming up cold and hungry to the rendezvous all through the night, felt at finding that the ash-trees, common to the neighbourhood, would burn with ease, though green. This was a novelty to them, coming mostly from Somersetshire, where there is little wood but the elm, which burns with difficulty, even when dry.

THE SOCIETY have to deplore the demolition, within the last few months, of the remains of the *Old Priory* (as it is generally believed to have been) at Keyford. The committee are however enabled to give an engraving of the same, from a drawing by Mr. C. E. Giles, with a short descriptive notice, in the second part.

Second Day.

THE second day was devoted to an excursion for the purpose of visiting the objects of archaeological interest in the neighbourhood. A party of nearly a hundred met at the village of Nunney, three miles from Frome, and inspected the ruins of the old castle ; in the midst of which Mr. C. E. GILES communicated such information as had been collected by Dr. HARRISON respecting the history of the building. The substance of the communication will be found in the second part, accompanied by a view of the castle in its present state.

The remains of a Roman Villa, at Whatley, were next visited. A cold collation had been provided on the spot by the hospitable proprietor, Mr. Shore ; by whose courtesy the society is presented with the subjoined copy of a letter from the pen of the late Rev. John Skinner.

(Copy.)

Camerton Parsonage,
September 10th, 1838.

Dear Sir,

Last week when staying at Southfield House I availed myself of the opportunity of visiting the Roman Pavement you have had opened on your property. And was much interested by what I saw, and the anticipation of future discoveries, for there can be no doubt, that the villa was far more extensive than what is already laid open, and that it was accompanied by other buildings of the Romans in the immediate vicinity, as well as of the Britons ; for the lynchets in the adjoining field, and the name of that *field*, *Chessil*, or *Chedsil*, prove to demonstration the prior occupancy of the Britons ; and that this in

their time was an out-post on the line of road between Tetbury, then an important settlement of the Belgic Britons, and Postlebury Hill another stronghold on the line of the *Portway*, which ran from *Uphill* on the Severn in this direction, and passing over *Gearhill*, the Somersetshire boundary, ran to Sorbiodunum or *Old Sarum*, (another Belgic British settlement) from thence to Winchester,—the *Venta Belgarum* or seat of the Belgæ, near the water, and thence to the capital of the Iceni on the Southampton water—where the trading vessels of the Belgæ of Gaul took their freight of the produce of the British mines in Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset to convey to the continent. I have traced the greater part of this road which communicated between the *Cangi* (a Belgic British tribe, dwelling on the coasts of Somersetshire, having the lead mines of Mendip in their possession) and the *Iceni*, another powerful British tribe, who dwelt between the rivers *Itchen* and *Anton*, on the site of the present town of Southampton. The ore when smelted in pigs was conveyed along this road on the backs of horses, two of them being a load for the larger class of animals then employed, and one for the smaller. (N.B. one of these pigs, probably cast on Mendip, is now in the Bath Institute, having on it the name of the emperor Hadrian, being his tribute from the mines). By taking this road, about 80 miles across between the two channels, the tedious and difficult navigation of the Severn was avoided, for before this mode of traffic was adopted, the vessels employed in it coasted round the Land's End and up the British Channel to the Isle of Wight, where the first depot of the metals was established. The Romans when they had dispossessed the Britons of their lucrative commerce carried their road on the line of the British trackway, and by this road was all the produce of our mining

districts conveyed across the island. The Romans living in the vicinity of this road had also an opportunity afforded of sending the produce of the metals smelted by their slaves, for in all the villas that I have here seen the *scoria* of iron and lead are found contiguous to the villas, and some I saw at yours. As you extend your discoveries you will meet with greater quantities, also the flues where the ore was smelted, and I doubt not discover the baths and hypocausts. That every success may attend your laudable endeavours in bringing to light the operations of a great and justly celebrated people, who had so large a share in the civilization of Europe, is the sincere wish of

Yours truly,

JOHN SKINNER.

To Mr. J. Shore.

The anticipations of the learned writer have been realized by the recent discovery of the baths and hypocausts. The committee are not furnished with sufficient materials for presenting a full account of these interesting remains, which afford scope both for the pencil and the pen. They trust the task will be undertaken by some member of the society, and that they may present the result in a future volume of the society's proceedings.

In passing through Orchardleigh Park, some supposed Druidical stones there attracted attention and inspection. On emerging from the park through the Gloucester Gate, the party found itself in the midst of the secluded village of Lullington. A paper on the church, by the Rev. Malcolm Clerk, was read in the churchyard. The committee hope to present the paper with illustrations of this little gem of Norman transition work, in a future volume.

In closing this notice of the third quarterly meeting,

the committee feel it a pleasing duty to acknowledge the unbounded hospitality of the friends of the society at Frome. Every gentleman opened his house to the strangers, and placed his carriage at the disposal of the committee, so that no visitor incurred any expense during the two days beyond that of going thither and returning. They have the further pleasure of acknowledging the assistance and co-operation of the Frome Literary and Scientific Institution in furthering the objects of the meeting. It is no longer a matter of doubt that the society has taken root in that part of the county.

The Museum.

THE following list comprises most of the objects of interest exhibited at the meeting at Frome, with the names of the depositors.

By the Rev. E. Dighton.—Specimen of Wood Carving, Foliage, Flowers, &c. Bronze Horn. Painting on Alabaster. Daguerreotype view of the leaning Tower of Pisa. Small Painting on China.

By Mr. J. Paget.—Metal Screen and Stand. Silver-mounted Cup of Cocoa Nut. Egyptian bronze Lotus Vase. Antique Watch and Etui. Manuscript Bible. Metal Figure, bronze. Roman Lares. Bronze Seal. Three engraved Pilgrim Shells. Ivory silver-mounted Box, once the property of Mary Queen of Scots. Missal, illuminated. Roman Pondus, dug up at Bath. Box containing Shirt and Combs of Charles I. Bronze from Ragland Castle. Casket filigree work.

By Rev. H. D. Wickham.—Two handed Damascus Sword. The Jones's Pedigree. Indian Dagger. Box, shell and wood inlaid. Gold and Silver Medals. Original Miniature of Cromwell. Locket Miniature of James II, worn by the Jacobites. White Cornelian Engraving by Pixler. Antique silver gilt Smelling Bottle. Fossil from Keyford, Frome. Illustrated Bible, 1680. Two trays of Coins.

By Rev. J. H. S. Horner.—Brooch found in the neighbourhood of Mells. Toy Matchlock. Key with Ring and Seal attached. Ancient Seal found at Mells. Five Indian Seals. Map of *Minedeep Forest*. Twelve Coins from Italica, Spain. Celt Hatchet.

By Mr. W. C. Cruttwell.—Silver Cream Pail of Dr. T. Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man.

By Dr. Harrison.—Bronze Inkstand. Chinese Painting.

By Rev. W. B. Calvert.—Bp. Kenn's Communion Service.

By Rev. E. Edgell.—Vases purchased in Italy said to be from Herculaneum. Medal, Charles I. Royal Seal and Coat of Arms,—the seal an official one of Mr. Folkes, who held a confidential office about James I.—the Royal Arms of the same monarch.

By Rev. E. K. Lutt.—Two Battle Axes.

By Mr. W. P. Penny.—Antique Silver Clasp. Original edition of Walton's Angler. Copy of Antique Sun Dial. Two carved Goblets of Cocoa Nut.

By Mr. Singer.—Gold Ring found at Pompeii. Old Carving found at Heath House, Corsley.

By Mr. T. B. Sheppard.—Vertebrae of the Ichthyosaurus.

By Miss Sheppard.—Saxon Ring found at Whatley. Fragment of old Urn found in old British burial place in the garden at Fromefield. Ancient Silver Medal,—obverse Crucifixion,—reverse, Brazen Serpent. Silver Medal, Family of James I.

By Mr. Wickham.—Two Ivory carved Antique Boxes. John Nider of Nuremberg, Sermones Aurei, 1479. Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe's Common Place Book. Psalterium, illuminated.

By Rev. H. Clutterbuck.—Three Numbers of Muscologia Nottinghamiensis.

By Mr. J. N. Highmore.—Nineteen silver and copper Coins.

By Rev. D. M. Clerk.—Mummy Effigy. Engraved Stones from a Mummy Case. Ring from a Mummy Case. Isis Horns, Naphys an Egyptian Trinity, &c. &c. From Egypt, Roman work used as a Strigel. Chain from a Mummy Case. Relic from Flodden. Seal of Clothworkers of the County of Kent. Five Ancient Seals. Seal of the Bishop of St. Asaph, 15th century. Lamp from Egypt, Roman work. Mummy Figure and Hieroglyphics.

By Mr. W. H. Sheppard.—Grafton's, Hollingshed's, Fabyan's, Caxton's, and Hall's Chronicles. Coverdale's Bible, Chaucer's Works. Manuscript of Bracton. Tray of Coins, some Saxon. Medals, Rosary, Pattern Coins.

By Mr. Baverstock.—Facsimile of Magna Charta and Sword.

By Rev. T. F. Dymock.—Seven silver, four copper Coins.

By Rev. W. B. Tritton.—Ancient Register from Cloford, about 1560.

By Mr. Shore.—Box of Relics from Whatley. Crucifixion and Carved Relic.

By Rear Admiral Sir E. C. Strode.—Ancient Brass, Gunpowder Plot. Rubbing from a Brass, Baynton Church.

By Mr. C. E. Giles.—Impression of Seal, Abbot of Cleve.

By Mr. Bunn.—Two Bronzes.

By Mr. Sinkins.—Ivory Casket.