

Inaugural Address.

THE Somersetshire Archæological Society has this year chosen as the place of their meeting this charming town in the neighbouring county of Dorset, in which, notwithstanding many objects of attraction, there is no archæological society.

The ground is therefore-free ; we are trespassing on nobody's especial province, and we may hope, before long, either that a separate Society may be founded in Dorsetshire, or, as the county is not a large one, that persons interested in our pur-

suits may join our Society, or offer to unite with us in a body, and extend the area of our researches to both counties.

Should such a proposal ever be made, I am sure it would receive, whether accepted or not, most careful consideration from the members of our Society.

Dorsetshire possesses many objects of interest, both in an archæological and in a natural history point of view. The beautiful churches of Wimborne and Sherborne, the remains of John of Gaunt's Palace at Canford, the mouldering stones of Corfe Castle, the splendid pile of Milton Abbey, and some very few remains of antiquity where once stood the celebrated Abbey of Shaftesbury, are places of great historical and archæological interest.

Then, in a natural history point of view, we have the curious formation of the Isle of Purbeck; the fine clay beds about Poole; the curious phenomenon of the Chesil beach; the landslip at Lyme Regis, and the wonderful beds of lias there, so productive of vestiges of the earlier creation. If Somersetshire be considered too small an area for our Society, we are fortunate in having so rich a region within easy distance, and accessible by railway.

By the kindness of the proprietors, we shall be able at this meeting to examine two of the most remarkable country seats in the county of Dorset. We shall visit to-day the lovely domain of Sherborne Lodge, as it was formerly called, which must ever remain associated with the name of the chivalrous Sir Walter Raleigh, who built the house, and laid out the grounds, perhaps on plans talked over between him and his great contemporary, Lord Bacon—"For this royal ordering of gardens" was one of the many sumptuous and seductive tastes in which they both agreed. They considered, in the language of that day, "a garden as amongst the purest of human pleasures, without which, building and palaces are but gross handyworks."¹ Hardly anywhere else are the tokens of

(1). Essay xlvi. "Of Gardens."

Raleigh's love of planting so conspicuous as at Sherborne. He loved the place for the remembrance of the domestic happiness he found there. From 1591 to 1594, he enjoyed, perhaps for the longest interval ever accorded to him, the rural and domestic pleasures of a seat—

Where winds, perhaps, our woods sometimes may shake,
But blustering care could never tempest make ;
Nor murmurs ere come nigh us,
Saving of fountains that glide by us.

We shall have the great advantage of being shewn over the old Castle by Mr. Clark, and we must ever regret that this masterpiece of military architecture, as it is called, of old Bishop Roger, of Salisbury, was sacrificed, but not by Raleigh, for the sake of its materials, to complete the Lodge.

To morrow, by the kindness of Lord Ilchester, we shall visit the ancient seat of Melbury, under the able guidance of Mr. Parker, and shall see several other objects of interest on the way.

This is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of our Society. Its inaugural meeting, at which I had the honour of being present, was held at Taunton, and Dean Buckland made there a remarkable, but somewhat eccentric speech. You know that shortly afterwards the reason of this eminent pioneer of geology gave way, and that he never afterwards recovered. No man knew our county better than he did, and the studies which made him famous were prosecuted at the Banwell caves and other spots within our boundaries.

Mr. Freeman also assisted us at the beginning, and has ever since shone among us as a star of the first magnitude.

The late Mr. Henry Drummond, in his inaugural address at the foundation of the Surrey Archæological Society, in 1854, spoke of the use of local societies like ours, to obtain accurate materials for the general history of our country, and told an anecdote of Mr. Hume, the philosopher and historian. "All our histories," says Mr. Drummond, "are but compilations; you may take Hume, he is nothing but a compiler, and very

inaccurate." I remember Mr. Bruce, one of the very first and ablest persons in the Record Office, stating that he had shewn Mr. Hume some very valuable documents in connexion with the history of the country, and he, on looking at them, said, "I admit they are very interesting, but, if I begin to read them, I shall have to write my history over again, for I am all wrong."

Now, Gentlemen, without in the least depreciating the peculiar merits of Mr. Hume's history, to which I am fully alive, I will say that there is a gentleman among us, Mr. Freeman, who, since Mr. Drummond spoke, has given us a real history of a portion of our national life; and who would write and re-write his history a dozen times, so long as he thought there were any materials unused which would alter the bearing of any portion of it.

Then we have the names of Sir Walter Trevelyan, Mr. Boyd Dawkins, Mr. Ayshford Sanford, and others, who have helped to keep up the reputation, and to insure the prosperity of our Society—so much so, that our list of members is now longer than it has ever been.

Especially, we have an admirable Museum, and natural history collections scientifically arranged, for which we have, I believe, especially to thank Mr. Sanford. We hope these will shortly be removed to a building worthy of them—namely, the magnificent old Castle of Taunton.

The period since 1849 has been one of great activity and much progress all over the world, both in archæology and in natural history. For we will use the term, natural history, in the more extended meaning which the ancients attached to it, as including everything that does not relate to the results of human skill, and the products of human faculties.

In every country men have sought to know more of those who have preceded them on the earth, and of the works which they accomplished. In the present day we are able to take a much wider view of archæology than those before us. Our

horizon is no longer bounded by what is called the *Classic period*. Bunsen calls the time of Abraham the *middle ages of the world*, and our knowledge of what we may call the *early history* before that time has been much increased in the last twenty-five years. In 1859, Layard published the account of his discoveries at Nineveh, and Rawlinson gave us the key to the treasures of the Mesopotamian libraries. We are now familiar with the appearance and manners of the Mesopotamian peoples, of whom our knowledge was previously very scanty.

The labours of Max Müller, and others, have traced the thread of our connexion with the earliest ages, and every schoolboy now knows that he belongs to the Aryan race, that the Persians and the Hindoos are his distant cousins, and that his relationship to them may be proved by his language, and the traditions which we have in common. One great fact brought out by the successful prosecution of this study of early history, is that not the meanest piece of knowledge is useless, and the most abstruse studies of the learned may now said to be principally occupied with clodhoppers' dialects, nursery tales, and old women's stories.

Again, Birch, Lepsius, Brugsch, and Mariette, have immensely increased our knowledge of the literature and manners of ancient Egypt, so closely connected with biblical studies and Assyrian history. Dr. Brugsch Bey is certainly one of the first Egyptologists of the present day, and I am engaged, in translating his remarkable *History of Egypt*, drawn from the ancient monuments. He writes to me a few weeks ago—"I must inform you, my dear Sir, that the second edition of my history, which is now preparing, contains exceedingly interesting results of my last studies on the subject of the history of this curious people, especially for that part which is contemporary with the events of the Exodus. I have made remarkable discoveries, which prove to me that the monuments entirely agree with the accounts of Holy Scripture.

You shall receive a pamphlet on this subject in a week or two, &c."

Then we have that remarkable expedition to Palestine, sent out by the Society of Biblical Archæology, which has already produced most interesting results, and promises us an increase of knowledge into the pre-Jewish history of Palestine.

Lycia and Asia Minor have enriched our National Museum with treasures, which have given us important knowledge on the early history of art. A portion of two out of the seven wonders of the world now exist in our British Museum, and some of the most important parts of the temple of Diana of Ephesus, and the magnificent tomb of Mausolus, erected by his queen, may now be seen in London, adorning our capital, where Sir Gilbert Scott has erected another monument for a widowed queen, which, I venture to think, goes far to equal the work of antiquity.

Mr. Schliemann is now engaged, with astonishing assiduity and liberality, in investigating the site of ancient Troy, and has been rewarded by the discovery of golden treasures, which have, perhaps, laid hid ever since the fatal night when the wooden horse entered the walls of Troy, and Æneas led the young Iulus to found the still more celebrated city of Rome.

The sacred flame of archæological investigation has even crossed the Atlantic; and, about the year of your foundation, there appeared in the new country of the United States, as the first of the *Smithsonian Transactions*, a most interesting memoir on the remains of ancient nations in the valley of the Mississippi. Since then the Americans have been most active in prosecuting researches into the pre-Columban, as they call it, history of their country, and they have many flourishing archæological societies.

Our horizon, too, has widened; we are no longer contented with mere historical research, we ascend to ages which have long been hidden, and pre-historic investigations must now be considered an important part of archæology.

In this pursuit, the two separate divisions of our Society—the archæological and the natural history section—may combine; and while the one looks with interest on the works of art, and other labours of our pre-historic forefathers, the knowledge of the geologist, and of the palæontologist, is required to approximate the time of these earliest vestiges of the human race.

Archæology is peculiarly suited to be pursued with success by local societies.

It is founded on a minute and accurate study of details. For good historical, or scientific observation, accuracy is the first thing required; and it is no easy matter to be a correct observer. But the place where we live, or which we very often visit, where we know every feature, where we have time for patient reflection, is just the place which we may describe thoroughly, so that the work need not be done over again. We can also collect traditions before they fade, and describe monuments before they pass away.

As it has been said that a man can never know any language perfectly, except his own mother tongue, so it may be said that a man has peculiar facilities for intimately knowing the country where he has been born and bred.

What admirable papers have been contributed to many local societies, such as the Caen Society, and the Archæologia Cambrensis, or Cantiana, or to our Society, by such men as Mr. Freeman, and Mr. Boyd Dawkins!

One of the most curious discoveries of modern times, that of the Lake Villages, was made by a private member of the Zurich Archæological Society, Dr. Keller, whom I hold in affectionate remembrance as my tutor when a boy. That discovery led to similar discoveries in various countries, from Italy to Ireland, of records of ancient nations, where, to the ordinary eye, there appeared no vestige of any human community ever having dwelt.

There's not an atom of yon earth
 But once was living man ;
 From the most gloomy glens
 Of Greenland's sunless clime,
 To where the golden fields
 Of fertile England spread,
 Thou canst not find a spot
 Whereon no city stood.

If ever we have a really good history of Somersetshire, we shall owe it, probably, to the interest inspired by our Society, and some of its distinguished members.

If some gentleman in every parish was to collect the details connected with it, and accurately examine the available records and papers, and describe the monuments of the past, and collect the traditions, we should soon have a body of materials which might be worked up into a really good history of our county.

The late Bishop of Salisbury, some years ago, requested every incumbent to draw up a short memoir of his own parish, and I believe that many gentlemen took great pains in executing the wishes of the good bishop, and that a valuable body of materials has been collected, which, some day, no doubt, will be made use of.

Our own Bishop has done us the honour of presiding over our Society ; has honoured us with his presence to-day, and always shewn a lively interest in our welfare.

The clergy, in past ages, have done, perhaps, more for archæology than any other body of men, and Mr. Hallam places the labours of the Congregation of the Benedictines of Saint-Maur, before all the labours of the two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge put together. I know of no reason why our Protestant clergy should be less industrious than the clergy of the Catholic past, without in any way neglecting their proper duties. They have all of them received a learned education, and I have always thought that a good, public, free, county library was much needed, where those disposed to keep up their learning might borrow the necessary works. Ac-

tuated by these views, I once, a long time ago, gave the nucleus of a public library in Wiltshire, but no progress in this scheme has hitherto been made.

There are very few counties more interesting than Somersetshire ; it is a kind of epitome of all England.

There is the port and marine of Bristol ; the fisheries of the Channel ; the coal and other mines of the Mendips ; the wild and beautiful scenery of the Quantocks ; the unrivalled pastures of the vale of Taunton ; and fruit orchards, which may vie with those of Kent.

The taste and wealth of Glastonbury, and other abbies, have made the most of the beautiful materials for building which we possess, and have left us, both in ecclesiastical and domestic architecture, edifices of consummate beauty, heightened by the charm of antiquity.

Our historic souvenirs yield to that of no other country.

First come the Celtic legends, which cluster imperishably round the Isle of Avalon. They relate to a people with many great qualities, and often brilliant genius ; always interesting, and always unfortunate. Whether their lot was to oppose the Roman, like Vereingetorix and Boadicea ; or the Saxon, like King Arthur ; or the Protestant succession, like Lochiel and the Highlanders ; or the Spanish Republic, like Don Carlos at the present hour ; we see the same qualities, and may predict the same fate.

Then we come to another hero, typical of a more successful people. The most important part of the history of the great Ælfred is very closely connected with our county. With us was passed his lowest point of depression ; from among us he sallied forth to permanent victory.

Then the Saxon rises and falls ; the Norman conquers us for our good. From the mixture of races rises the English nation. English institutions pass through a healthy growth ; but when an attempt was made to check the development of our institutions, in the 17th century, Laud and Strafford had

to yield to Cromwell, and the unfortunate Charles II. found a refuge among faithful friends in this neighbourhood.

Again, a few years later, Somersetshire was imperishably associated with the rebellion of the unhappy Monmouth, and traditions of the rebellion, and its cruel suppression, were, as we know, long preserved about the neighbourhood of Sedgemoor.

Thus, Somersetshire, from the earliest to the latest times, had her full share of the interest attaching to the growth of the noble stream of English history. If we have Arthur and Ælfred at the beginning, we may look to Blake in comparatively modern times; to Locke, who pursued here his philosophical studies; and Wellington, who honoured us by taking the deserved title of his victories from a small town in our county. What nobler field can the archæologist have than to examine the features, and collect the traditions of a county where great events have passed, and great men have lived. Each village, almost, has traditions and remains connected with the early history of our county. Let us hope that the roll of Somersetshire worthies is not yet closed, but that the rising generation, when they study our past history, may emulate their forefathers, and remember that, with education at every man's door, we are more and more approaching the ideal of the political economist, when every man may start on equal terms in the race of life. Our common history is the common property of all, both rich and poor, and I should like to see the day when the cottagers should feel as much interest in Ælfred, in Drake, in Bacon, in Watt, as the most distinguished member in our Society. If tradition is dying out, reading and instruction must take the place of the old, unwritten epos. More pains should be taken to teach our English history to all classes.

Sir Francis Palgrave observes, "Our English archives are unparalleled. None are equally ample, varied, and continuous; none have descended from remote times in equal preservation

and regularity, not even the archives of the Vatican." There can, therefore, be no excuse for not teaching to all classes our glorious history ; and, depend upon it, that no nation can continue to hold its place which forgets the deeds of its forefathers, and who does not feel the deepest interest in the archæology of the spots where they laboured or bled.

I feel that I am only a *locum tenens* for the distinguished and popular owner of the magnificent domain of Sherborne Castle, who would have presided to day, but is incapacitated by ill health from taking the chair on this occasion, and I trust that the kindness of the meeting will pardon all defects, and forget my shortcomings in the interesting addresses and papers of the several distinguished gentlemen who have honoured the meeting by their presence.

Mr. CHISHOLM-BATTEN proposed, and Canon MEADE seconded, a vote of thanks to the President for his able and interesting address.