

The PRESIDENT then delivered his

## Inaugural Address.

THIS year the Somersetshire Archæological Society has chosen as its place of meeting the town of Frome, the centre of a district which to the student of archæology especially presents many attractions. Our possessions may not be so widely known to fame, perhaps, as the remnants of Nineveh or the ruins of Troy. But as compared with the value of those memorials, which chronicle only the doings of a single period, you have for investigation in this part of the county of Somerset relics of ancient Britons, Romans, Danes, Saxons, and Normans, each contributing in turn to increase the store of knowledge which you as Archæologists are accumulating. Scarcely necessary is it however for me to enlarge on the value of this district as a field of inquiry. To the Archæologist all that is valuable

anywhere and everywhere belongs. There is not a carved capital but has its story for him ; not a stone or monument but yields him food for thought ; not a fossil or shell, or ancient door, but adds to the knowledge which he wishes to gain. And were the district to which you are come apparently less fertile in archaeological treasures, there would be, for all that, necessarily sufficient to reward the research. Somersetshire however is a country which is well and favourably known to Archæologists everywhere. Its very name has furnished ground for valuable discussions, some insisting that the summerlike temperature of the atmosphere during a certain portion of the year gained it enviable notoriety, while others who call to mind its condition in winter, the dirty state of its roads, and the marshy character of the land, as shewn in the old proverb, "Bad for the rider but good for the abider," declare that the name of the county is derived from the town of Somerton, and in support of their assertion quote Asser, the old English historian, who always calls it in his writings the County of Sumertun. Be this as it may, I have no intention of re-opening the discussion, nor do I propose to go at any very great length into the history of the county itself. Of its condition during the occupation of the Cangi,<sup>1</sup> we know very little. Presumably these early Britons were about as wild as the rest of their countrymen, and as little inclined to civilisation as the most erratic. Yet they left their mark on the district, and indeed, their names ; for have we not Wincanton and Cannington still bearing witness that the Cangi once ruled in the land ? The Saxons, however, were a much more practical people. Like their representatives in the Fatherland at the present hour, they appear to have had a very clear idea of the value of territorial property. They parcelled out the land and divided it into kingdoms, seven in number, with a clearness of purpose, which in the eyes of a modern German should give them great favour. And the West Saxon Kings having thus obtained possession of this district in the year

(1). A small tribe of the Belgæ.

519 they did the best they could to make themselves comfortable. So comfortable were they in fact that we hear but little of them till the year 688, when a very notable personage, one King Ine ascended the throne.<sup>2</sup> Then we find a West Saxon King fighting the men of Kent and extending his kingdom to the south of the Thames on the one hand, attacking the Welsh and beating them on the other, and all the while doing something or other for the cause of religion. The results of his energy and piety were a college at Wells, dedicated to God and St. Andrew, and various other works of lesser note, and it is indirectly to him that we are indebted for the See of Bath and Wells, for it was his immediate successor who turned Ine's college into the seat of a Bishop, about the same time that he rebuilt the famous Abbey of Glastonbury. How great a temptation there is to linger over these so called good old times! The doings of the Earls, who under the West Saxon Kings after Egbert, had rule and sway in this country, and in their own district, had almost absolute power, would doubtless, were they known, read more like a romance than a historic tale. They used, it appears, to have the power of determining all controversies, punishing malefactors, and more generally administering what they were pleased to consider justice. In these days of enlightenment, with a free press and a free platform, our ears are now and then shocked by a somewhat strange freak on the part of individuals appointed to administer the law. But what must have happened in the days when newspapers were unknown, and public meetings were scarcely dreamt of? There were Hun, for instance, and Earwulf, who was killed in 823, of whose origin little is known, but who so bravely fought the invading Danes, and at the head of the men of Somerset and Dorset so beat these old sea kings that for six years they refrained from coming any more. After what sort did they

(2). Ine ascended the throne 91 years after the mission of St. Augustine, and 54 years after Christianity had been first preached to the West Saxons by Birinus.

administer the laws and decide between the common people? We may have sadly degenerated, as some people tell us, in these modern days; but there are few, for all that, who would care to go back to the laws and customs of Ethelbald and Edmund Ironsides, even for the pleasure of beating the Danes once more. Yet they were brave men and left "footprints on the sands of time," as Longfellow says, and we as Archæologists in Somersetshire have much for which to be very grateful to them.

Then, to leave history for a moment, the Archæologist finds himself here in a district of great importance, geologically speaking. The sister science indeed finds here the most wonderful examples. In Somersetshire the greatest extremes meet, and the various strata, which usually can only be examined by traversing vast distances, are brought together—the lowest and latest formations are all close at hand. In the Mendip Hills, which commences not very far from this place, are fine specimens of trap or volcanic rock. Mines of lead and zinc, worked long ago by the Romans, have been recently reopened on their summit. North of the Mendip range are wide spreading coal fields. Of red sandstone there are extensive and varied deposits. The limestone near Milverton is full of interesting fossils. Lias may be found at Taunton, Somerton, and Combwich. Oolite is discovered at Castle Cary and Bath. Iron too seems to have been smelted in this neighbourhood, near Bunns Lane, for a few years ago some gentlemen came upon a heap of what appeared to them to be charcoal scorïæ, mixed with iron ore.<sup>3</sup> The green sand is found along the eastern border of the county, at the elevated point on which Alfred's tower stands. Although there are no collieries south of the Mendips, there is a reasonable probability on geological grounds of coal being found towards the south and south-west, seeing that these hills have evidently been lifted up through what was once continuous strata. Dr. Buckland was of this opinion,

(3). The Iron Mells Bridge.

and a report to a similar effect by a distinguished member of the Royal Society, Mr. John Prestwick, was a few days ago placed in my hands. Altogether then this district is peculiarly rich in valuable fossils and curious disruptions.

Then architecturally we have many objects of note in this county of ours. Take for instance the Abbey of Glastonbury, founded in the first instance by Joseph of Arimathea, whom Philip, or the Apostle St. Paul sent to preach the gospel in Britain, and styled by our ancestors the first land of God, the origin and foundation of all religion in England; or in our own immediate neighbourhood at Witham, the first priory of the Carthusian monks in England, founded by Henry II., and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, St. John Baptist, and All Saints. The ruins of the monastery have been removed, and the church, erected about 1175 by the third Prior, Hugh, who was sent for expressly from the Chartreuse to establish order among the monks who had been most troublesome to his two predecessors, is the only remaining portion of the building. St. Hugh was afterwards created Bishop of Lincoln and died about 1129. There are, I believe, only two other churches left which were built by this body of monks, though there were seven or eight different settlements of them, and, with the exception of the Cathedral at Wells and Abbey in Bath, it is the only church in the diocese with a stone vaulted roof. Then there are the curious old sculptures at Wellington, the rich stonework in Wells Cathedral, the Castle at Taunton, also the Abbey at Sherborne, to say nothing of the places of interest you are shortly about to visit, and the scores of other interesting spots where in years gone by you have pleasantly wandered.

As a Natural History Society too you will find much that will please and reward you. For amongst the fossils to which mention has been made and in the skeletons discovered at various times, you have the richest possible store of specimens both of fauna and flora. Bats, shrews, seals, red and fallow deer, dolphin, grampus and whale, vultures, eagles, owls of all

kinds, and a hundred birds long since departed, are all here, and it would need a long list, much longer than I have time for, to enumerate one half of these undoubted treasures.

While, historically, the student of ancient times might spend much time and gain much knowledge as he visited Ilchester, where Roger Bacon was born in 1214; Wrington, where the great philosopher Locke first saw light; Taunton, with its memories of Charles II, and its hall where the infamous Jefferies held the Bloody Assize; Castle Cary, where the Duke of Monmouth once found shelter; Sedgmoor, the scene of his defeat; Dunster rising at the foot of a fortress reared by the Norman to curb the Englishman. But with such treasures at your feet it would be prodigal to attempt all at once even were that possible; and therefore it is that you confine yourself to certain districts each year, and, like the Saxons of old, parcel out the land, making the most of what is to be gained by careful research.

This year then you are in the Frome district, and are about to consider its archæological specimens. A very fruitful district is that to which you have come. Here it was that Adhelm, the kinsman of King Ine, built a monastery in honour of St. John the Baptist, somewhere about the year 705. And what more fitting name could there be, St. John had preached in the wilderness, they also had a wilderness in the great forest of Selwood, and a river flowing not far below the foundations of their church. Unfortunately for the monks, however, the Danes made a sudden inroad, and so persecuted the holy men that Frome monastery was speedily deserted, although the church that belonged to it lasted till the reign of King Stephen. Indeed at Lower Keyford some vestiges of the building now remain, but they are now converted into small houses for poor families. St. Aldhelm is said to have been buried in a wooden church at Doulting, about seven miles from this place. Then there is a record of the Norman land survey of Frome still extant, by which it appears that it yielded to the King fifty-

three pounds and five pence yearly. Parenthetically I may mention also that a return which was made in 1669, of all able men in the Hundred of Frome, shows that there were then 188 in all, namely, light horsemen, 8; pikemen, 52; archers, 51; bell men, 51, and gunners, 15; while out of a rate of £8,000, collected in the county of Somerset in 1636, for the purpose of preparing a ship of 800 tons, the Hundred of Frome contributed £250. Frome appears also to have been famous so long ago as 1623 for its cloth manufactory, depending entirely (owing to the wooded character of its neighbourhood) for its supply of corn and the other necessaries of life upon Wiltshire. Its inhabitants too at that period seem to have been very abstemious, for I find it stated in an old record that the number of alehouses had been reduced. Of the church I will say nothing beyond recalling to your memories that it was here that good old John Humphrey, in 1662, choosing rather to obey the dictates of conscience than the behests of a thoughtless king, was ejected from his living as Vicar of Frome, and with the rest of the nonconforming clergy of that time, went out like Abraham of old "not knowing whither he went." Here too it was that Bishop Ken, who died while on a visit to his friend and patron Lord Weymouth, was reverently buried. Of the curious monuments and plates to be found on its ancient walls, two or three demand particular attention, more especially the petition for prayerful remembrance on behalf of Henry Champeney, and a later epitaph to one of the Leverage family. Leaving these you will proceed to Vallis, with its beautiful vale and wonderful rocks, affording deep interest to all who learn lessons from the grand book of nature.<sup>4</sup> Wednesday will be a day of great enjoyment, for the programme is a very varied one. Orchardleigh, with its old church and the Champeney monuments, will be your first visit, passing by the old stone, about which there is so much mystery, and which will afford you a fair field for original thought and discussion. Then Lullington church, with

(4). Explained by Mr. Moore.

its curious associations, will stand for your inspection. In the year 1292 the value of the living was six pounds, and in Henry the Eighth's time, when that merry monarch dispossessed the Prior of Longleat to whom the advowson belonged, it fell into the hands of John, Prior of the Carthusians, and eventually became the property of the Earl of Hertford. Philips Norton, with its famous old George Inn, and Farleigh Castle will be the next places on your route. The former is a remarkable looking structure of the 15th century. By some it has been thought to have built as a kind of hunting box for Henry VII. Its chief interest however consists in the fact of Monmouth having slept there on the night of the battle when his troops were defeated by the royal army under Feversham and compelled to retreat southward by Frome and Bridgwater to Sedgemoor, where as you all know was fought the battle which ended in his total discomfiture, his subsequent flight, capture and execution. Thence you will return to Beckington, the birth-place of the good Bishop Beckington. The church will be found well worthy a visit, containing as it does several very curious plates and monuments, which shed a great light on the thoughts and doings of the olden time. Here it is that John Cooper, ancestor of the Earl of Shaftesbury, was buried, and bequeathed the sum of forty shillings in consideration of being placed under the high altar. Samuel Daniel, once poet laureate to Queen Elizabeth, also lies in this church and has a monumental bust erected to his memory by the Countess of Dorset.

On Thursday, after a peep at Longleat House, and a short time spent at Holwell quarry, mainly on behalf of geological friends, your steps will be directed to Nunney Castle, with its church and manor house. The name of the place derived from an old nunnery which in Saxon days stood on the banks of the stream hard by, first strikes your attention. You are face to face to antiquity at once, and from beginning to end you are studying English history all the while you prolong your stay. The castle, built about the end of the 13th century by Sir John



Delamere, could, were walls to find speech, tell a marvellous tale. Leland, who wrote about it in the time of Henry VIII, thought it a "pratty castle," but said the interior was somewhat dark. Probably prisoners thought so too. The walls were very strong and the moat was then 20 feet deep. King Charles I thought it a place of some strength for he garrisoned it and left a great store of powder in its precinct. The Parliamentary army however found a way of getting in, and the shattered walls tell to-day how very rough were these practical Puritans. Having thus endeavoured briefly to give you a description of the places to be visited, I will conclude with the hope that your visit to Frome may prove both interesting and profitable. The advantages of such researches as these are too patent to need any eulogy from me. To the archæologist himself they afford undoubted pleasure, while to all the community besides they are of paramount importance. For it is by labours, such as those to which you are about to devote yourselves, that history is completed and perfected. The rise and progress of the institutions and of the constitution, which we as Englishmen hold so dear, are set forth in these stones, monuments, and carvings. From them we learn how

"The thoughts of men have widened  
With the process of the suns,"

and are able to deduce lessons which are of the utmost importance, politically and socially. How valuable such knowledge is I need scarcely say. By ascertaining the mistakes of the past we are able to avoid errors in the future. By learning the dangers which have beset our liberties in times that have gone by, we are induced to set more store upon the freedom we possess. And comparing the life of the nation in ages when education and civilisation were in their infancy with these more enlightened days, we are led to conclusions which have a beneficial effect upon our thoughts and actions alike. Fortunately for us this very knowledge is to be obtained in the most agreeable manner. Our lessons are holiday trips, our hardest tasks

congenial discussions. Adopting Carlyle's language, we as archæologists say,

“ In what land the sun does visit  
Brisk are we whate'er betide  
To give space for wandering is it,  
That the world was made so wide.”

And wandering, not listlessly, but intelligently, we daily add to the store of knowledge which we possess, and are stimulated to yet farther researches and more persistent inquiries.

MR. E. A. FREEMAN proposed, and MR. H. DANBY SEYMOUR seconded, a vote of thanks to his lordship for his address, and requested that he would allow it to be printed in the next volume of Proceedings.