

The President then delivered the following

Inaugural Address.

I AM called on to address you to-day from a different place, and in a different character, from any that I have held among the many meetings of this Society in which I have taken a part. At other times it has fallen to my lot to speak of some particular object, or class of objects, among the various branches of study which our Society takes in hand. But, placed as I am now by the favour of the Society in the chair of its President for the year which has just begun, it seems, for this time, to be rather my business to speak, according to the examples of my predecessors in the office, not so much of this or that particular object examined in detail as of the general aims and objects which the Society sets before itself. The part of the county in which we are now met is rich in objects of various kinds, which open a wide and varied field of study for students of those several branches of knowledge which it is our special business to bring together in friendly union. But, saving one spot which speaks more truly home to myself and to my own special studies than any other in the whole shire, I would gladly, for this year, leave the treatment of particular objects in the hands of others, and rather say what I have to say as to the general ends of the Society and the means by which those general ends may be best furthered.

Our Society then is the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society. It is a Society for the study of certain branches of scientific research. But it is also a

local Society. Its sphere is not the whole world or the whole Isle of Britain, but the one shire of Somerset. Its objects of study are very wide, but its local range is comparatively narrow. It opens to us a great variety of subjects of research, but it lays on us a certain limit in the mode of their study. They are all to be studied with a special local reference. We have to deal, not with Archæology or Natural History in general, but with Archæology and Natural History with special reference to our own shire. Is this local limitation a narrow or an illiberal one? I think not. It may easily be made so, but it is not so in itself. I believe, on the other hand, that special local study, such as it is the object of societies like ours to foster, is a matter of absolute necessity to the full and thorough knowledge of any subject. All that is needed is that, while our studies are local, they should not be purely local. We should study the antiquities and the natural history of our own district as our own personal and immediate business; but we should study them with constant reference to the antiquities and the natural history of other districts. Unless we do this, we cannot really understand the objects to be found within our own district. How can we tell what is really characteristic of Somerset, how can we tell what is really worthy of notice within its borders, unless we compare the phænomena of Somerset, in its natural features, its local speech, its buildings and other works of human skill, with the corresponding phænomena in other districts? It is precisely from neglecting this obvious rule that local subjects have so often been studied in a dull and narrow spirit. A man knows—that is, he has got together in a kind of way—every fact of a particular class bearing on his own town or county. But, because he never turns his eyes to the like

facts in other towns and counties, he fails to get at the real meaning and value of the facts of his own town or county. He knows nothing of their relations to anything beyond his own border; he is constantly liable to set down as characteristic of his own district something which is common to it with many other districts; he is equally liable to pass by something which is really characteristic or even unique. The common county historian never thinks of trying to connect the particular history of his own district with the general history of the country; he is too busy copying fulsome epitaphs and tracing out fabulous genealogies to think that the monuments which exist in his own county, the particular events which happened within its borders, can be so treated as to become contributions to the general history of the nation, and therein to the general history of mankind. But, if local history is studied in this wider and more enlightened way, it becomes quite another matter. No man can spread his personal researches over the whole world; he can hardly spread them over the whole of Britain. But he may study the phenomena of his own district, not as something apart, beginning and ending in itself, but as the phenomena of that part of Britain, of that part of the world, which it is his personal business to master in detail. He may study them with a constant eye to the whole of which his district forms a part, and to the other parts which join with it to make up the whole. Let a man illustrate a Somersetshire church. But let him not try to illustrate it as a fact which has no reference to anything beyond its own parish and its own diocese. Let him deal with its architecture as a contribution, greater or smaller, to the general history of architecture in England and in Europe. Let him deal with its ecclesiastical history as in the like sort a contribu-

tor to the general ecclesiastical history of England and of the Western Church. Let a man illustrate the history of a Somersetshire borough. But let him not illustrate it as something whose political life is wholly isolated, but as one example of a great law, as one instance among many of that twofold revolution which first gave our municipal towns their external freedom and then brought them under the yoke of internal bondage. Nay more, let him remember that the principles which he finds working on a small scale at Ilchester or Axbridge will not only be found working on a greater scale in Bristol and York and London, but that it was simply the fuller and freer play of the same principles which wrought out the history of the mighty commonwealths of Bern and Venice, and which shone forth with yet more undying brightness in old Rome and in older Athens.

I would here give one caution. I do not in the least recommend that he who undertakes the illustration of some particular local subject should of necessity preface it with an introduction going back to the creation of the world, or even to the landing of Cæsar. This is the kind of thing which antiquaries of the elder school were in the constant habit of doing. Nothing was ever more hopeless than the result. Sketches of general history, attempted by men who had never learned to take a general view of anything, are far less to the purpose than the pettiest local detail. A man had better stick to measurements and pedigrees than tell over again, at every place he comes to, the same dull ceaseless repetition about Britons and Romans and Danes and Saxons and Normans, the whole series of the revolutions of our island being gone through on each occasion, and gone through with very much less of life than some of our friends know how to put into the dry

bones of an ichthyosaurus. I certainly counsel nothing of this kind. All that I do counsel is that, if any man is writing about or inquiring into any particular local objects or class of local objects, he will always bear in mind that the real value of local researches consists in the light which they throw on the general study of which they form a part, and also that, without such more general reference, the local objects themselves cannot be understood.

Looked at in this point of view, as helps towards something higher, the value of local researches can hardly be rated too highly. The local antiquary is often a dull dog; but there is no need that he should be so, and in many cases he happily is something quite different. The distinction is an easy one; the local antiquary is a dull dog as long as his thoughts and objects are purely local; he ceases to be anything of the kind as soon as his thoughts and objects are guided by an intelligent eye to something wider. The course of my own work has led me to make minute local researches in many places. I have had to trace out in detail many of the towns and of the battle-fields of England and Normandy. And whenever I have found, as in most places I have found, some intelligent local observer, the gain which I have reaped from his help has been more than I can put into words. The inquirer who looks at the local object simply as part of a greater whole may be able to teach many things to the local observer, but the local observer has many things which he can teach the general inquirer back again. Long familiarity with the spot is sure to bring to light many things which fail to attract notice in the excitement of a first eager examination, but which often prove to be as valuable for the purpose in hand as the features which catch the eye at the first glance. There is no district, no town, no parish, whose history is

not worth working out in detail, if only it be borne in mind that the local work is a contribution to a greater work. The history of some places will be far more interesting, far more valuable, than that of others, but there is none which, if dealt with as it should be, will not have some interest and some value. I know of none which may not be the means of adding something to the mass of our general knowledge.

The object then of our Society is the study of the local history of our own county viewed, I would venture to add, as a contribution to general history. Let not any zealous advocate of the more physical side of our Society's pursuits spring up to challenge the accuracy of my definition, as if I were trying to make a monopoly of the Society for my own studies to the shutting out of his. I trust fully to satisfy him in a very few moments. All that I ask him to do is to take the word History in a somewhat wider sense than usual, but a sense which I think that I shall not find it very hard to justify. Our Society takes in a wider range of subjects than most Societies of the kind, and I hold that it is one of its best features that it does take in that wider range of subjects. We call ourselves, not simply an Archæological Society, but an Archæological and Natural History Society. There is perhaps a little awkwardness in the title. The adjective "Archæological" does not couple very well with the compound substantive "Natural History;" but I cannot suggest any better way of expressing our meaning, and, if we turn from the name to the thing, I hold that the meaning which we wish to express by the name is exactly what it should be. I say that our object is the study of the history of the district; what distinguishes us from most local bodies of the same class, is that we begin our study of the history of the

district sooner than they do—in short that we begin it at the very beginning. If I rightly understand what is meant by Natural History, its introduction simply amounts to what I have just now said, to the beginning of the study of our local history at the earliest possible point. I conceive that we do not intend by the words Natural History to take in the whole range of the natural sciences; I conceive that many branches of natural science would be as foreign to our objects as moral philosophy or pure mathematics would be. I conceive that Astronomy or Chemistry would be subjects as much out of place at one of our meetings as a discussion on personal identity or the nature of the Unconditioned. And this for the obvious reason that it is impossible to clothe any of these subjects with a local character. I speak under correction, as I feel that I am getting quite out of my depth, and I may be saying something which is not a little foolish. But I imagine that the nature of the sun's heat, and the chemical composition of air or water, must be exactly the same in the county of Somerset and in all other parts of the world. It is, I imagine, quite impossible to deal with these subjects in such a way as to give them any specially local interest. Special facts in those subjects may be incidentally clothed with a local interest, as, for instance, if a local historian should record some special celestial phenomenon seen only within a certain range. But it would seem that the sciences themselves, Astronomy, Chemistry, and several others, cannot be clothed with that really local character which would bring them within our proper range. With some other branches of natural science the case is wholly different. Geology, Palæontology, Zoology, and Botany are studies which have an essentially local side. To find out all that the district contains in these several ways is, I hold, an

essential part of its history. Even if we take the word history in the narrower sense, to denote the history of man only, these are subjects which cannot be neglected, because all of them, except perhaps Palæontology, have more or less direct bearing on the history of man. The social and political condition of a country is largely affected by its physical condition. And what determines the physical condition of a country except the constitution of the land itself, the plants which clothe it, and the animals which dwell in it? The connexion between the two branches of our studies is forced upon us at every step and from every point of view. The study of history is nothing without a mastery of historical geography; historical geography is every moment dependent upon physical geography; and physical geography, the knowledge of the earth's surface, at once carries us up to geology, the knowledge of the earth itself. Or, from another point of view, the condition of man in all ages has been largely affected by the *fauna* and the *flora* of the district in which he lives, by the nature of the animals and plants which he either turns to his own use and sustenance or else sweeps away as rivals with him for the possession of the land which he claims as his own. In all stages of man's history, some knowledge of the lower forms of creation by which he is surrounded will always form a part of the perfect knowledge of man. But in the early stages of his history, the closeness of this connexion increases tenfold. Between the provinces of Palæontology and Primæval Archæology it is impossible to draw any well defined line. When we find the fossil elephant with its bones showing the mark of the flint weapon of the primæval savage, we have indeed reached a point which the antiquary and the naturalist may each, with equal right, challenge as his own.

And I may add, though this point of kindred has less of connexion with any aspect of local research, that the study of antiquities and the study of natural history are studies which follow much the same method and which call for the exercise of nearly the same faculties of the mind. Both study phænomena, both classify them, but neither professes to discover actual physical laws, neither claims for its conclusions the certainty of mathematical demonstration. Both are studies to be followed by the same kind of process and in the same spirit. They are studies which have a wide field of subjects in common. They are studies which are alike needful for the full mastery of history, general or local. The political historian deals with the history of man in ages for which he has the witness of written documents. The primæval antiquary deals with his history in ages whose only records are the tombs, the weapons, the other relics, of days earlier than documents, earlier than legend itself. The palæontologist carries the tale further back into days when man had not yet trod the earth, or at least had not yet made good his lordship over it. The geologist plunges deeper still into præ-historic lore, and, from the witness of the earth itself, he draws forth a chronicle of ages when as yet no living thing had found a dwelling-place on its surface. Yet surely all deal only with successive acts of one great drama. The work of each still goes on by the side of those who are less his successors than his younger fellow-workers. The labours of all join together to form the continuous record of the earth and the dwellers upon the earth from the days of chaos to our own time.

It is in this sense then that I say that the object of our Society is the study of the history of the district from the beginning, the history of the land itself and of all the living things which have dwelled on its surface, from the

earliest fact that geology can reveal to the latest piece of local history which is removed enough from our own ken to be clothed with any share of the charm of antiquity. It is the geologist who begins the work, and his work has a direct bearing on the work of all who come after him. I need hardly say that the nature of the land itself, which it is his business to set forth, has had much to do with determining the character of its later history. A land of hills and valleys, a land of marshes dotted with fertile islands, was of necessity a land hard to conquer, a land which, if conquered, could not fail to be conquered piece-meal, a land which supplied places of shelter for faithful hearts till the hope of brighter days dawned upon them. The revolutions of the earth which gave the land its present form, the stirrings of primæval forces which threw up the great hill-wall of Mendip, the isles of Avalon and Athelney, and the loftier and wilder heights to the further west, did but call into being the theatre of the events of the seventh century and of the ninth; they provided the fastnesses which in due time were to shelter the Briton against the Englishman and to shelter the Englishman against the Dane. The unwritten record of the Titanic powers which called into being the land in which their deeds were to be wrought becomes, hardly by a figure, a part of the history of Ceawlin, of Cenwalh, and of Ælfred. From the studies of those who set before us the revolutions of the land itself, we pass on—if we can be said to pass on, if the two studies are not absolutely one and the same—to those who tell us of the successive forms of animated life which have appeared on its surface, who tell us of races of beings which have passed away, of the elder forms which have left their relics embedded in the very stone, and of the younger forms whose bones we find buried in the dens and caves of the hill-sides where they dwelled.

It is surely a part of the history of the land to call up the days when the deep holes of Mendip were the home of the hyæna and the cave-lion, and when man, far feebler than they in natural strength, and furnished as yet with the feeblest of tools and weapons, had to strive how he might to win and hold the land against rivals so far mightier than himself. In our gropings into these unrecorded times we are not dealing with men of our blood, we have not yet reached the days of our own forefathers, nor of those whom our forefathers overthrew. But still we are dealing with the history of man, the history of his earliest culture, the history of those rude strivings which grew into the useful and ornamental arts, of those first rude stirrings of the mind which grew into philosophy and religion and political life. All these, in whatever corner of the world, among whatever race of men we find them, are all alike essential parts of man's history. And such contributions as our own district can make to this great study, such traces and relics of primæval man as are to be found within its borders, form a part of our studies which supplies the natural link between the time when the land was undwelled in, or dwelled in only by the lower forms of life, and the land dwelled in by the men of recorded history, the men of our own blood and speech, and the men of another blood and speech whom they found within it. In contrast with the primæval savage, the successive waves of Aryan settlement seem but as generations of one great family. The Celt, the Roman, the Teuton, all who played their part in the great drama of written history, their laws and their language, their arts of war and peace, the strongholds which they reared for defence and the temples which they reared for worship, all form one vast whole, one great group of subjects, parting into countless branches, but still forming in its essence one great study, the study of

man, to be traced no longer only in unrecorded relics, but in the surer witness of written history. All these various objects, from the ancient rivers and the everlasting hills to the latest work of the craft of man's hand and the cunning of his heart, all come within the scope of our study, because all join to form one vast volume, in which is written, in different tongues and in different characters, but in tongues and characters none of which fail to find an interpreter among us, the history of the land itself and of those who from the earliest times have dwelled within it.

I breathe more freely on coming within the range of written history. The early history of our nation is one to which the contributions of our own district are large and important. We live in a shire which really has a history. The shire of the Sumorsætas, like the other West-Saxon shires, is not a mere artificial division mapped out in comparatively late times round a leading town as its administrative centre. It is a district with a being of its own, a substantive part of the settlement of the West-Saxon people, a conquest won bit by bit in hard fighting against the British enemy. There are other shires in which, in later times at least, a greater number of the leading events of English history took place, but, save the shires of Kent, the first English possession, and of Hampshire, the first West-Saxon possession, no part of the land has had a greater share in the work of turning Britain into England. Our land was a border district, a district which was long the battle-field of contending races, a district from which the Briton was not wholly swept away, but where he gradually learned to adopt the language and feelings of his English conquerors, a district the names of whose hills and valleys, and of some even among the settlements of man, still keep some traces of the speech of those who

gave way before our forefathers. It is in all these aspects that the student of early English history finds in Somerset, and in the other western shires, a richer field than in some other parts of the island whose name is oftener found in the later history of our country, but which have not, as the western lands have, a distinct history of their own. The first English settlement in what became the land of the Sumorsætas marks one of the most important stages in the progress of English conquest. The fight of Deorham gave Ceawlin the three great Roman towns of Bath, Cirencester, and Gloucester. It gave him the frontier of the Axe, and that fierce struggle of which many of us have seen the speaking relics first planted the West-Saxon Dragon upon the heights of Worlebury. It was then that northern Somerset, up to that time British and Christian, became for the first time English, and, in becoming English, became for a while once more heathen. But this was not all. The victory of Ceawlin, which gave him the land of Gloucester and Somerset, decided the fate of Britain for ever. The long continuous line of British possessions, taking in the whole western side of the island from the Land's End to the Firth of Clyde, was now cloven asunder. Wales, in the modern sense, was cut off from Damnonia or West-Wales, and the isolated British states were left, with strength enough indeed to keep up a stubborn resistance, but not with strength enough to keep back for any long time the destined advance of the English invaders.

In the next stage of our history, in the seventh century, our own shire, earlier than any other part of England, gives the first example of conquests in a new form. The West-Saxons are now Christians, and, though Christianity has not put a stop to wars and conquests, it has

caused them to be carried on in a far milder way. The vanquished are no longer slain, enslaved, or driven out; they are allowed to sit down as fellow-subjects with their conquerors, subjects indeed of a lower rank, but still no longer enemies or wild beasts, but men living in the King's peace and under the protection of the law. It was in our own shire that the conquests of Cenwalh called into being that state of things which is set before us in the laws of Ine, a state of things in which Englishman and Briton could live in peace side by side, but in which the Englishman of every rank is recognized as being, in the eye of the law, of higher value than the Briton of the same rank. It was in our own shire that the English conquerors, now become the fellow-believers of the conquered, for the first time learned to spare and honour their temples and their ministers. The British Ynysvitrin rose to higher wealth and fame as the English Glastonbury, and the burying-place of the half legendary Arthur became the burying-place of Eadmund the Magnificent and Eadgar the Peaceful. Side by side with the more ancient monastic house of Glastonbury presently arose the secular foundation at Wells, a foundation of purely English birth and purely English name, which, as the Church of the West-Saxons grew and prospered, became the seat of a bishoprick, cut off from the wider jurisdiction of the elder mother churches of Winchester and Sherborne.

We pass on to the proudest moment of our local history, when one single spot of our shire, one single island in a Somersetshire fen, remained the only independent England; when Ælfred went forth from his shelter at Athelney to overthrow the invader at Ethandun, and to come back within our own borders, leading with him his foe, at once conquered and converted, for the rites of his baptism at Aller and of his

chrisom-loosing at Wedmore. But, before the days of that great struggle and deliverance, the land and its folk had become one. The distinctions of conqueror and conquered, which stand out so plainly in the laws of Ine, find no place at all in the laws of Ælfred. Before his days the first struggle was over; the land in which we dwell had become wholly an English land, a land of men who, whatever they were in strictness of blood, knew no name and no speech but that of Englishmen. We pass on from the days of Ælfred to the days of his not unworthy successors, and we find along our coasts many a point where Danish invaders landed only to learn what was the might of Englishmen in the days of England's hero-Kings. At last the days of peace come under the rule of the mighty Eadgar, and one of the two great ceremonies of his reign, the solemn rite of his crowning, is held within our own borders, in the old borough of Acemannesceaster, which by another name men Bath call. A gloomier time now comes, the days of unrede and of unlaw, when the strength of England was paralysed by the misrule of Æthelred and the treason of Eadric. We had our share, though less perhaps than some other parts of ourland, in those dark days of shame and sorrow. Yet a few gleams of light here and there relieve even those days of darkness. It was a day of sorrow, but it was no day of shame, when the men of Somerset marched forth to help their brethren of Devonshire, when they met the Dane face to face in open battle and gave their lives for England on the fatal heights of Penhow. It was a brighter day when the men of Somerset were among the first to press to the banner of Eadmund Ironside, and helped to win on their own soil, on the happier heights of Penselwood, the first fight of that year of battles which called to mind, if not the lasting success, at least the

heroism and the glory, of Æthelstan, Eadmund, and Ælfred. And, before that year of wonders had come to its end, it was a day of awe indeed and sorrow, but not a day wholly without hope, when the last champion of England was gathered to his fathers beside the high altar of Glastonbury. There slept the mightiest champion of the Briton against the Englishman and the mightiest champion of the Englishman against the Dane. And thither came the Danish conqueror himself, Cnut the Lord of six kingdoms, to pay his vows at the shrine of his sworn brother, and to bring to the holy place of Briton and Englishman the offerings of yet another race of conquerors and converts.

A district which plays such a part as this in our early annals has indeed no mean contributions to make to the general history of our country. We may look at them in two aspects. It is plain that a large proportion of the great events of our early history took place within the borders of our own shire. It is no less clear that our own shire itself has a history of its own in a sense in which a mere artificial division, like most of the midland counties, cannot be said to have a history. The scenes of all these events are among the fittest objects of study for the local historian. Every one of these spots should be examined, every detail of their physical features, every trace which they have yet to show in the way of earth-works or other signs of man's presence, should be carefully searched out, and, if it may be, brought again to life in the way in which the earliest and greatest of all, the vast hill fort of Worlebury, was brought to life under the hands of Mr. Warre. But at every stage of the hurried sketch which I have made of the early history of the district, some incidental point of study is suggested to us. The hill of overthrow at Penhow, and the hill of victory at Penselwood alike bear names which

have lived on from the speech of the conquered Briton. Nowhere is a richer field opened to the student of local nomenclature and local dialect than in a district like this, a district conquered bit by bit, and from which the earlier inhabitants were never wholly driven out. The mention of the Old Borough, the Roman *Aquæ Solis*, the English Bath, the great prize of victory of Ceawlin and the scene of the peaceful splendours of Eadgar, at once suggests two fields of local enquiry. It suggests the study of such traces of Roman occupation as are to be found within our borders, not in the dull and lifeless spirit of the elder school of antiquaries, but as a help towards solving the great problem of our early history, what was the state of our Island at the time when our fathers set foot upon its shores? It suggests too the careful study of our municipal antiquities and the general history of our towns. This is no small subject in a district so full of towns of various sizes, and towns whose origin and history fall under so many distinct heads. The Roman city of Bath, the King's town of Somerton, the Bishop's town of Wells, the Abbot's town of Glastonbury, Taunton springing into being as a border fortress of the English against the Briton, Dunster rising at the foot of a fortress reared by the Norman to curb the Englishman, Bridgewater keeping in its corrupted name the memory of its Norman lord, all these and a crowd of others have each their own tale to tell. Each has its own contribution to make to the history of the district and therein to the history of the nation. Wells and Glastonbury again, the heads of two great classes of ecclesiastical foundations, suggest the vast stores which are open to us in the ecclesiastical buildings of the county and its ecclesiastical antiquities in general. Large as is the stock of writing which has been brought together on the history of

Wells and Glastonbury, a stock to which I have myself added somewhat, the history of neither place is as yet exhausted, nor can it be exhausted till some one finds at once the will, the skill, and the opportunity for a fuller and more intelligent study of manuscript records than they have as yet come in for. For the general ecclesiastical architecture of the county I have myself striven to do somewhat in the course of the various meetings of our Society. And what I have mainly striven to do has been to put the two local forms which have at different times prevailed in this county in their due relation to the forms which prevailed elsewhere. The early Gothic of Somerset is a style of its own, a style which has more in common with contemporary continental work than with the work usual in other parts of England. It is a style not absolutely peculiar to the district, but one which appears beyond its borders in Gloucestershire and South Wales. The later Gothic of Somerset is what we may call the central and culminating form of a style which, in less fully developed shapes, is common to the whole West of England, and which again appears in South Wales. Its peculiarities cannot be so well understood as by comparing it with the style common in the other district of England which is equally rich in the later Gothic, the distant land of East Anglia. This comparison I tried years ago to draw out before our own Society, but I feel that there is still much to be done. The causes local, personal, or accidental, to which the architectural diversities of different districts are owing, is a subject which has never yet been worked out as it deserves to be.

But ecclesiastical architecture is not the only form of architecture in which Somersetshire is specially rich. Our ancient domestic buildings, our manor-houses and our

parsonages, chiefly of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but in some cases of much earlier date, are among the most characteristic antiquities of the county. In fact we need not stop at the sixteenth century. A very respectable style of house-building went on, chiefly in smaller houses, all through the seventeenth century, and even far into the eighteenth. Indeed it might not be too much to say that the old feeling in the way of house-building never wholly died out; that the late revival of better taste in these matters was in this district something not utterly new, but simply the giving of a new strength to something which still lingered on, though in but a feeble guise. But the elder houses are among the most precious remains that we have, and they are among those which are the least understood and valued. The wanton havoc which has been wrought in this way, within the last ten years, in the one city of Wells is enough to make us tremble for the buildings which have still been spared there and elsewhere. This is a class of antiquities to which our Society, chiefly under the care of Mr. Parker, has for a long time given special attention. It will be something if we can awaken in the public mind enough care for these things to save what is still left to us. It will be something if we can even persuade people in general that domestic buildings are domestic buildings, that every mediæval house was not necessarily a dwelling-place of monks or nuns, that the laity and the secular clergy of those times sheltered themselves within walls and roofs just as their successors do now, and that, in the days when our great parish churches were rising, the patron and the parish priest did not dwell in tents or in dens and caves of the earth, but were to be found in houses—in this district in goodly houses of stone—beneath the shadow of the greater building on which they lavished all the wealth and skill of their age.

The prevalence of stone building in Somerset at once carries us back to those præ-historic studies at which, some time ago, I glanced as nearly as I dared. Stone building was common here at a time when wood was commonly used in many other districts, because Somerset supplied good building stone in abundance. The ancient basilica of Glastonbury, the British temple which had lived on through the English Conquest, was marked as something strange in its material of wood or wicker, and the charter which Cnut granted within its walls was specially marked as being signed "in the wooden basilica." But when the same King built a church to commemorate his victory at Assandun, it was noted as something worthy of record that it was a minster of stone and lime. A wooden church was something which seemed strange among the rich quarries of Somerset, and a stone church was something which seemed strange among the thick woods and chalky soil of Essex. And as with churches, so with houses. Ages after the days of Cnut, the houses, in a large part of England, were still largely of wood, while in Somerset—as, for the same reason, in Northamptonshire—stone was freely used both in the towns and in the open country. Here is a case in which the physical character of the country has had a direct influence upon its style of art, a case in which the lore of the geologist is called in as a friendly comment on the lore of the antiquary.

The mention of the houses of the district naturally suggests those who dwelt in them, and we are thus at once brought to the subject of family history and genealogy. Now nothing can be more repulsive and unprofitable than the study of genealogy and heraldry as they commonly are studied. When the arbitrary rules of heraldry venture to claim the rank of a science, when we are called upon to believe that they have existed from all eternity, we are

tempted to turn away from the whole thing with contempt. But the fact that, from the twelfth century onwards, men did mark their shields with personal devices, and that those devices became hereditary in their families, is a fact which deserves our attention as much as any other fact in the history of armour, or costume, or custom of any kind. It is in one way worthy of more attention than other facts of the same class, because, as these devices came to be used according to a certain fixed system, they constantly enable us to fix the dates of buildings, and to ascertain other points of historical detail. A knowledge of the costume of various ages gives exactly the same help, and, like heraldry, like the knowledge of prevailing customs in any age, it rightly takes its place among the secondary branches of historical study. All these studies come directly home to us. All of them, as applied to our own district, form part of the object for which we are come together. As for genealogy and family history, nothing indeed can be duller than a pedigree as we commonly see it in a peerage or a county history, with the mythical generations at one end and the obscure generations at the other. But family history can have life breathed into it as well as any other subject. The mere list of names, the Christian names, surnames, and titles used at various stages, the cause of their adoption and the various forms which they take, all form contributions to the study of nomenclature, and even to the direct study of history. And the real records of a family, whenever we can get at them, their manner of life, their correspondence, their private quarrels, their lawsuits, their wills and inventories, all combine to throw a light on social and legal history, on the way in which men lived and thought and acted, which can hardly be thrown upon it by any other means. Nothing, in short, which calls up

the state of things in any past age more vividly before us can be called foreign to our objects. The slightest notice of local feelings and local customs never comes amiss. It is something when we read in the life of the first Earl of Shaftesbury a letter addressed to his illustrious Somersetshire friend Locke, in which he tells him,

“Somersetshire, no doubt, will perfect your breeding. After France and Oxford you could not go to a more proper place. My wife finds you profit much there, for you have recovered your skill in Cheddar cheese, and for a demonstration have sent us one of the best we have seen.”

It is pleasing to find that our local cheese had already won a reputation which it still keeps. But the last sentence of the letter is, I confess, more mysterious. The statesman winds up with this strange blessing on the philosopher:—

“Thus recommending you to the protection of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, whose strong beer is the only spiritual thing any Somersetshire gentleman knows.”

It were heresy to doubt that “zider” was known and valued in those parts for ages before the time of Shaftesbury. Are we then to suppose that the palace ale in the time of Bishop Peter Mews was of such special strength and goodness as to drown in the minds of the gentlemen of Somerset, not only the thoughts of things spiritual, but the very memory of their native drink?

I go back again for six hundred years. I cannot end this address without at least a word or two as to the special associations of the place in which we are met, and of its immediate neighbourhood. On no part of our county, or no part of the whole kingdom, is the mark of the great crisis of English history more deeply impressed than on the spot where we now stand, and on the spot which we are to tread on the morrow. The town in which we are gathered together formed part of the

endowment which the Norman Conqueror gave to the great church of his foundation in his own land, that mighty minster of Saint Stephen where Lanfranc bore the staff of the Abbot, and where he himself at last found the seven feet of ground which was all that the land of his fathers and the realm that he had conquered had to give him. And the first stage of our journey to-morrow will lead us to a spot than which two spots only within the whole realm of England ought to speak with a more living voice to the hearts of Englishmen. After the hill of Senlac and the vanished choir of Waltham we may fairly place the wooded hill of Montacute. No spot has more to tell us, none more directly suggests the memories of the great struggle which brought England for a moment under the yoke of the stranger. Our whole land indeed is full of memories of those days, but round that one spot they gather beyond all others. It was there, when the place yet bore its English name of Leodgaresburh, when King Cnut reigned over the land, that men found the wonder-working Rood which has left its name behind it on the further side of our island. The relic which was found on the peak of Leodgaresburh was borne by the Sheriff Tofig to his distant East-Saxon home. There his bounty raised the first lowly church, and gathered together the first band of votaries, which grew into the minster and the town of Waltham Holy Cross. There the relic, so strangely translated across the whole breadth of England, received worthier honours in the greater foundation, the more stately church, which displaced the works of Tofig at the bidding of Earl Harold. The Cross of Waltham, in our eyes rather the Cross of Leodgaresburh, became the special object of the devotion of his life, the rallying cry of the men who fought around his standard. It was before

that Cross that the King knelt in the great crisis of his life, on his march from his northern field of victory to his southern field of overthrow; and it was from the awful form wrought on the sacred stone that he received, so men then deemed, the mysterious warning which told of his coming doom. And it was that Cross which gave England her war-cry. It was at the name of the Holy Cross, the Holy Cross of Waltham and of Leodgaresburh, that men's hearts rose high on the day of battle. It was in its name that Englishmen clave through the Norwegian shield-wall by the banks of Derwent, and that they bore up around their chosen King against the charges of the Norman horsemen and the more fearful thunder-shower of the Norman arrows. And we may deem that no hearts beat higher to its call, that on no tongues the war-cry rose more loudly, than on those of the men who marched from the first resting place of the Holy Rood to fight and die for England on the far South-Saxon hill. And, before long, the war-cry of the Holy Cross was heard around the spot where the Holy Cross itself had been first revealed to the eyes of men. Three years after the great battle, when the whole West was conquered, when Exeter itself, the centre of the great Western struggle, was held in fetters by the castle reared on its own Red Mount, the hill of Leodgaresburh, now bearing its French name of Montacute, had, under that foreign name, become the object of the bitterest hatred of the men of the Western shires. The peak which had sheltered the relic so dear to Englishmen was now crowned by the vulture's nest of the stranger. The Castle of Montacute now stood on the height, the fortress of Robert of Mortain the brother of the Conqueror, the man who had received a greater share than any other man of the spoils of England, and whose hand was pressed

with special heaviness upon the whole of the Western lands. Among those isolated movements against the Norman power, which, had they been guided by a single head and a single hand, might have driven back the stranger from our shores, the men of Somerset and Dorset rose with one heart and one soul to attack the stronghold which was at once the speaking badge of their bondage and the living instrument of their oppression. It was around the walls of the castle on the peaked hill that Englishmen dealt the last blow for freedom in the Western shires. It was there that the last patriotic rising was crushed by the heavy hand of Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances, by the help, one blushes to say, of the English forces of the shires and cities which were already conquered. The doom of the vanquished was heavy. Hands lopped off, eyes torn from their sockets, bore witness to what was then deemed the mercy of a prince who in his sternest moments was ever sparing of human life, though he scrupled not to inflict punishments than which we should deem death itself less frightful. And after all, the vengeance which the foreign Conqueror wreaked on the men of Somerset and Dorset was not heavier than the vengeance which came on their sons in a later day at the hands of Kirke and Jeffreys.

Those days are past. The peak of Montacute is no longer crowned by the stronghold of the oppressor. The castle of Robert of Mortain has utterly vanished, and its memory seems well nigh to have vanished with it. The later history of Montacute gathers, not around the castle on the peak, but around the more peaceful buildings at its foot. The Priory, the parish church, the stately Elizabethan mansion, are the objects which the name of Montacute now most commonly suggests. But it is well to go back to earlier times, to think of the days when that spot beheld

one of the last hopeless struggles of conquered England, and to the earlier days when the Holy Cross, the Cross alike of Waltham and of Montacute, was the last cry which rose from the lips of the men who died around the Standard of Harold.

The BISHOP proposed a vote of thanks to the President for his extremely able, interesting, and eloquent address. It was rather tantalising, sometimes, to those whose reading was less extensive, to find what an enormous amount of instruction, interest, and pleasure was derived by those whose minds were well stored, as was that of their learned President, with historical information. Although it was tantalising to feel that they had in some respects lived so unprofitably and had done so little compared with what they might have done, yet he was not discouraged. When he found that a well-stored mind could afford such pleasure to itself and diffuse such information to those around it, although many of those present were not young he felt that they might take encouragement and devote a little more time to such studies. The President had, throughout his address, continually shown them that the great interest of all those subjects was their relation to man. That was the real truth, and he was very much struck with it. The subject of deepest interest to all was man himself, the particular position which he occupied in God's creation, and the close relation in which he stood to his Creator. Those wonderful gifts—mental, intellectual, moral, and spiritual—with which God had endowed him made him the object of such stirring interest. He believed that they would find that when they were most deeply interested it was in the consideration of subjects connected with the happiness and moral being of

man. It was a magnificent view if for a moment they carried back their thoughts to prehistoric times and saw how the prescient mind of the Creator in those great geological revolutions ; was preparing the earth for man ; how, in the various disturbances and arrangements of earth, sea, rock, and so on, He moulded the character of man and furnished him with extraordinary powers. It did give man a wonderful, instructive, and interesting example of those long successive links in the chain which ran through the whole of the works of God—showing that there was a connection between the troubles, battles, and conflicts which formed so much of history, and the geological revolutions which had formed the earth. In this way he believed he had caught the spirit of the address, which had interested him deeply. He begged, in the name of the company, to tender their thanks to the President.

The Rev. H. T. ELLACOMBE, Rector of Clyst St. George, Devon, then read an elaborate and interesting paper on the “Mediæval Church Bells of Somerset,” which was extensively illustrated with casts and rubbings from a great number of bells of churches in different parts of the county. It is hoped that this paper, with suitable illustrations, may in due time be published in the Proceedings of the Society.

Mr. THOMAS BOND followed with a valuable notice of the Church of Pendermer, and of the Monument erected to Sir John de Dummer, temp. Edward I and Edward II.

The following notice was then read of