

At half-past seven an

Evening Meeting

was held in the Town Hall.

Mr. E. A. FREEMAN was first called upon to speak, and pointed out, in a speech of great clearness and eloquence,

The Special Position of Wells in contrast with other Boroughs.

He said that the cities and towns of England might be divided into three distinct classes according to the different elements which were strongest in them and decided their character at their birth; these elements were ecclesiastical, civil, or military. Wells was a purely ecclesiastical city, not simply because the Bishop of the Diocese had his seat there, but because of the position in which the city had always stood to him. There were some cathedral cities which were far from having had an ecclesiastical origin. Exeter and Wells would be found to stand in striking con-

trast. I have been, he said, lately to Exeter for the meeting of the Archæological Institute, and the difference is therefore specially in my mind. It is not merely that Exeter is bigger than Wells, but that they belong to entirely different classes of cities. Exeter is perhaps the most prominent example in England of a city which began as an early fortress, then became a Roman city, then an English city and so on to our own day. But the city of Exeter existed for ages before the Bishop, and the Bishop came in at a comparatively late time. Now in Wells the Bishop did not find himself a place within the walls of a city, because before he came there was no city: a church had been founded; the see of the Bishop was placed in that church, ecclesiastical foundations grew up round it, and people came and dwelt under the shadow of the Church of St. Andrew. Mr. Freeman also marked out more fully the divisions of towns, showing that while some like Exeter grew out of præ-Roman fortresses, others were of Roman origin, while others like Reading were purely Teutonic settlements or *marks*, the dwelling place of a clan which had grown into a town, and whose origin is often marked by the gentile ending *ing*. A third class has arisen not only since the English, but in some cases even since the Norman Conquest. To this class belong the military posts of which Taunton in the south, and Pontefract and Richmond and some other such places in the north of England are striking examples. To another class belong the rare instances of commercial towns which have arisen at once at the bidding of a king, such as Kingston-upon-Hull. To a fifth class belong the towns which have a purely ecclesiastical origin such as our own city of Wells. One class of these takes in towns which owe their existence to some abbey. In many such cases a man went

and set up a hermitage in order to retire from the world, and the very opposite came about to that which he had looked for. The hermitage grew to be a monastery, and around the monastery grew a town. To this class belong Bury St. Edmunds, Crowland, and Evesham. A smaller class of towns, like Wells, owe their existence to being the seat not of an abbot but of a bishop. Wells, as I have often said, is a purely secular foundation. There never was a monk here by any chance; our church has always been from its very beginning a foundation of secular priests. This is the great reason why Wells is the very best example to be found in the whole world of a secular church with its subordinate buildings; there is no other place where you can see so many of the ancient buildings still standing and still put to their own use. Mr. Freeman described the city as seen from the east, from the Shepton Mallet road, where the best and most beautiful view is had of the Cathedral Church, with the lovely and unique group of the Chapter House, the Cloisters, the Palace, the gate and other buildings. He also spoke of the fine parish Church of St. Cuthbert. He went on to speak in terms of warm admiration of the paper which Mr. Irvine had read. He said that he and Mr. Parker had first been led by their own inquiries to think that the west front was older than the nave; then they dutifully followed Professor Willis in holding that the west front was later than the nave; but that Mr. Irvine had that day shown that the Professor was mistaken, and that he and Mr. Parker had better have followed their own ideas than have bowed to his superior authority. But I cannot, he said, speak without mourning of the buildings of the city, for they are perishing, and no one seems to care about them. Where is the Prebendal House in North Liberty? Where is the Organist's House?

Who pulled it down? Will any one stand up and say boldly why it was pulled down? Then the only living record of the special history of the city for ages has been rubbed out by pulling down the middle wall of partition which had stood between the close and the city. Pull down the houses by all means, if you like, so that the wall may be seen—no one would have grudged them; but a foolish hole has been made in the middle of the wall for no purpose save that, when you go out of the west door of the Cathedral you may have a view of the Swan Hotel. Mr. Freeman also spoke of smaller acts of wanton destruction, of a good doorway and window destroyed in a tavern called the City Arms, of a freestone label cut away from a house in Chamberlain Street in order that something spick and span might be put in its place. He was in the habit of speaking his mind on such matters, and cared not what anyone felt about it. He only wished to see the people who did such things; but they kept themselves in the dark. He had pointed out what there was once in the city and what there was not—what there was a little time ago, and what there ought to be now.

Mr. Freeman's speech was received with great applause.

The Rev. Prebendary SCARTH then read a paper "On an Inscription" lately found at Sea Mills, near Bristol. He considered that the word SPES was a Christian name, and that the inscription was not, as had been supposed, in any way connected with the worship of Mithras.

A short abstract of this paper has been kindly made by Mr. Scarth, and is printed in Part II.

Mr. J. H. PARKER, C.B., agreed in considering that the inscription belonged to a Christian tombstone.

The Rev. Prebendary EARLE thought that there was no ground for believing that "Spes" was a Christian

name. It appeared to him to express a religious sentiment; and that, as in Old Testament history, they had Ebenezer, the Stone of Help; so this was the Stone of Hope.

The Rev. GEORGE WILLIAMS next read extracts which he had translated from a curious Latin MS., "On the rival merits of Bath and Wells." He said, by way of introduction, that some who were present might remember that when the Society last met at Wells he read an account given by Chandler, who was Chancellor of Wells in the middle of the fifteenth century, of the state of the city and of its ecclesiastical establishment at that time. He had since edited the Life of Bishop Beckington for the Master of the Rolls. In doing this he was led to examine a document in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, which had been placed there by a former master of Trinity named Neville, who was also Dean of Canterbury. In this MS. he found a discussion between S.S. Peter and Andrew on which of their respective cities was the more worthy to be the seat of the Bishop.*

The MS. has been edited by the Rev. G. Williams and is printed in Part II.

Mr. F. H. DICKINSON said that he had intended to speak on the subject of the Canons' Stalls, but felt that it was impossible to do so at that late hour. He would, however, mention that he had in his hand a paper sent him by Canon Bernard. It was a summary made by M. Dubos, the able keeper of archives of the department La Manche, of some papers of the 13th century relating to some property in Normandy which belonged to the prior

* The volume from which the Rev. G. Williams extracted this discussion was kindly exhibited by him in the Local Museum; it contained a beautiful portrait of Bishop Beckington.

and canons of the monastery of Bruton.* He would like to say something in addition to what Mr. Freeman in his somewhat fiery speech had said concerning Mr. Irvine and his paper. He hoped that the plans which Mr. Irvine had used would be printed in the volume of Proceedings, as well as his remarks. This would no doubt be expensive, but the Society would, he thought, cheerfully make some sacrifice to procure the clear and able explanation which they had heard.

The HON. SECRETARY then stated that he had received a paper from Mr. H. B. Woodward, F.G.S., giving an account of the geology of the district, and that he had handed the same to Mr. Sanford, as it was something especially in his line, but that he feared that there would scarcely be time to read the whole.

Mr. SANFORD regretted that there was not time to read the paper throughout, but gave an epitome of it, and proposed that it should be taken as read.

Mr. G. T. CLARK, in reference to the summary just given, spoke of an axis of elevation, raising the coal measures, extending from Swansea, which passed obliquely under the Severn, and near to the cities of Bristol and Bath, which was called the Wick Rocks.

The Rev. H. H. WINWOOD questioned the accuracy of the summary which Mr. Sanford had given of Mr. Woodward's paper, and asserted that its whole tenor was contrary to what Mr. Woodward had formerly published.

Mr. SANFORD considered that he had accurately represented the contents of the paper.

The HON. SECRETARY said that Mr. Woodward had kindly given his paper to the Society, and that he would

* See Part II.

take care that it should be printed in full so that all might be satisfied concerning the writer's opinions.

Mr. HUNT then announced the programme for the next day, and the meeting broke up.

A great number then went to the Cathedral, the interior of which was most successfully lighted with lime light by the kindness of Mr. Newnham.
